Short Stories

No. 713.) Week ending August 30th, 1902. (Price One Penny.

"Oh, forgive me!" she cried, "I was mad!"

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Short Stories

No. 713. ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending August 30th, 1902.

HER RIVAL.

The Powerful Story of a Broken Masterpiece.

CLARE HARDING looked out across the square at the wind-tossed trees and the leaden sky, and the rain that had been pouring down in torrents all day long.

It was a dreary, desolate prospect, but the girl's mood was in harmony with the weather. She knew it and took a morbid pleasure in the comparison.

Yet, truth to tell, Clare had no business with dismal thoughts. If she had only known it they were of her own making. But she did not know this, and her misery was very real to her.

To Clare's friends it seemed that she possessed everything the heart of woman could desire—health, youth, beauty, and the love of "the best fellow in the world."

Well, that was their point of view; Clare's was different, and so it happened that when, according to the judgment of her friends, she should have been happiest, she was often most miserable.

There is tragedy as well as farce in such a situation, and a hair's breadth divides the one from the other.

Clare was no less in love with Dick Stanton than he with her. Yet there were occasions when her love meant only unspeakable wretchedness to her.

Dick was poor, but it was not his poverty that troubled Clare. She believed in the young sculptor's genius, in his ability to climb the ladder that led to fame and fortune. She knew that sooner or later the day was bound to come when Dick would be rich, respected, his name a power in the world of Art.

Already he had taken the first firm step upon that ladder, and soon he would be able to offer her the modest home that would content them.

There was no false prudery in Clare. She loved Dick, and she made no secret of her desire to become his wife.

The strange thing was that, though the girl realised that it was by means of Dick's genius that her dearest wish would be fulfilled, she looked upon that very genius as her greatest enemy.

From the very first, almost ever since she had known Dick, a fierce unreasoning jealousy of the sculptor's art and his enthusiasm for his art, had tormented her.

Many a time in the days before he had confessed his love for her, she had watched him when he spoke of his beloved work. With a strange pain at her heart she had seen the light leap to his eyes, and the colour to his cheeks, and even in those days she vaguely hated the curious, intangible power that could move him thus.

And now—now that she had a claim upon him—she had learnt to look upon Dick's art as upon some dangerous rival to herself that was for ever threatening to come between her and his love.

For a time he had succeeded in lifting her very near to heaven by the ardour of his wooing. He had thrilled her with his eager, passionate words.

"I love you with all my soul, with every beat of my heart," he had said. "There is no thought of mine that does not belong to you."

She had listened in an ecstasy of happiness, and for a time she was content.

Then, one day, she realised that the great love he professed for her was not the all-absorbing passion of his life of which she had dreamt.

She saw that his art still occupied a cherished place in his affections, and the slumbering demon of jealousy once more awakened in her bosom.

She tried to stifle the pitiful, contemptible thing, but it was too strong for her. The fear of it haunted her day and night.

And all the while Dick was absolutely unconscious of its presence. He made no secret before Clare of his devotion to his work. He gloried in it, and manlike he took it for granted that his sweetheart shared his enthusiasm.

And she, ashamed of her weakness, did not dare to undeceive him.

Once or twice she ventured to remonstrate with him, playfully, for some trifling neglect of her, but he little guessed the real bitterness of spirit that was hidden beneath the jesting words.

"You're late, Dick," she would say to him lightly, "I've been waiting for you a whole hour. Think of that!"

"My darling, I'm all regrets, but that Cupid of mine was a ticklish business, and had to be finished!" Or—"Psyche wouldn't let me get away," he would tell her gaily. "I had a model who won't be able to sit for me again, and so I was obliged to make the most of her, you see."

Then he would begin to talk to her fondly of his work' of his hopes and fears, of the difficulties he had succeeded in overcoming, and of those that were yet to be conquered.

There were moments when his ardour kindled hers when.

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she was carried away in spite of herself by the sheer force of his enthusiasm.

At such times she would listen eagerly, with shining eyes, to his eloquent description of some beautiful work of art, to his dreams of some bold, half-formed conception of his own brain that was to make his name immortal.

Then suddenly the hateful thought would come to her that in all this *she* had no actual part, that she was listening to the story of another love, a love that had supplanted hers, and then she would set her lips and clench her hands in a kind of hopeless rage because it was not she who had brought that look of adoration to his face.

Except when some business that was unavoidable called him away, Dick never allowed a day to pass without seeing his sweetheart. But his visits were often but a few moments' respite from work, when he would come to her only to snatch a kiss and a few hasty words of endearment.

Sometimes it was a pressing commission, or a capricious model that claimed his time; at others it was some sudden inspiration that had to be embodied, lest it should escape again.

"I'm sorry, dearest," Dick would say, regretfully enough, "but you understand, don't you, little girl? It's my duty, and it's got to be done."

His duty! How she hated the word!

But she only smiled back at him, nodding her fair head, and telling him she understood.

On rare occasions he would explain to her tenderly that, in the midst of all his work, he thought of her, and of the happy time to come when he could ask her to redeem her promise.

"It's only by my work, sweetheart, that I can hope to win you," he told her. "It's my work that is bringing you nearer and nearer to me. No wonder that I love it!"

The girl said nothing, but in her heart she thought—"It is a pretty pretence, but he can't deceive me. I know that he loves his work, not for my sake, but for its own. He loved it long before he ever knew me. If I were to die he would find his consolation in it. It is a joy to him, apart from me."

Dick's studio was but a stone's throw from the square in which she lived, but Clare seldom entered it.

Now and then she paid a brief visit to the place to inspect some piece of sculpture that he wished to show her, but she never came to him there while he was at his work.

At first he had reproached her with the fact.

"Why do you despise my poor workshop?" he demanded. "Think of the beautiful hours we could spend together! With your presence to inspire me, I could work twice as well."

"I'm not so sure of that!" she retorted. "I'm afraid my presence would only disturb you. And if it didn't," she added, with a little laugh that hid the tremor in her voice, "if it didn't, *I* shouldn't like it! You see, it would be so humiliating to be ignored in favour of clay and marble chips."

He smiled at this way of putting the situation, and he little guessed that the girl's words, so flippantly spoken, might be taken seriously as expressing her whole attitude towards himself and his art.

One day Dick came to Clare with a radiant face.

"My darling! Here is good news for you!" he cried joyfully. "More work has come to me—important work. A rich American has bought my Amaryllis, and he wants a companion to it. He came to the studio just now. Only think—he says he's going to *discover* me! If I satisfy him, my fortune's made! That's his way of putting it, not mine. Dearest, think of it! Our time is coming!"

He drew the girl towards him, and clasped her to his breast, and for one brief moment she was happy. His first thought had been for her!

"Tell me," she asked presently, "what is to be your subject?"

"Phyllis and Corydon," he returned, with a little grimace. "Hackneyed, isn't it? But I can't help myself. Mr. Van Martin chose it. He's left the treatment to me, though. That's a great deal to be thankful for. I must think of something new, and then hunt for suitable models. I have my eye on Corydon, but the lady puzzles me. None of my present models would do at all. Now, for instance——"

He talked on excitedly, half to Clare, half to himself, and soon he appeared to forget the girl's presence altogether. Drawing out his note-book he threw himself into the nearest chair and began to cover sheet upon sheet with rough pencil sketches, as idea after idea chased each other through his restless brain.

Clare watched him in angry, rebellious silence. The tears of humiliation and disappointment rose to her eyes, but she choked them back with a desperate effort of her will.

Presently, when the light within the room grew faint, she rose quietly, lighted the gas, and began to pull down the blinds.

Dick looked up from his work as a man who had been suddenly roused from a dream.

"My dearest, forgive me!" he exclaimed penitently. "What an ill-mannered brute I am! I'm afraid I quite forgot where I was!"

"Don't apologise, Dick," said Clare, in her quiet voice. "It's an absorbing business, I know."

When he had left her, she burst into a storm of jealous, passionate tears.

Some days later he announced, with an air of triumph, that he had discovered a model for Phyllis.

"She's an absolute treasure!" he told Clare enthusiastically; "as near physical perfection as anything I've ever seen. I was afraid I should have to do the usual patchwork business—taking an arm here, and a nose there, and a chin from somewhere else, you know. But with this girl it's all plain sailing. She's a beautiful creature in every way. I shall want no other model at all. The curious part is, she's not a professional, and yet she's as easy to work with as any woman I've ever had. Her limbs seem to fall quite instinctively into the right poses."

From that moment Phyllis and Cordyon were never out of Dick's thoughts or Clare's.

The young sculptor took an unaffected pride in his own creation. He was in excellent spirits.

"We're progressing more quickly than I had hoped," he told Clare one night. "Another day or two of good steady work, and my clay model will be finished. Alice gives me her last sitting to-morrow."

Alice; that was the name of his beautiful model. Her Christian name. He always called her by that. Clare supposed it was customary among artists, and yet—even so insignificant thing as this could trouble her when she was in a morbid mood.

She felt unreasonably angry with this girl—this Alice—who was the most perfect creature Dick had ever seen.

He had never called *her* perfect. But then, it would have been untrue, and Dick was never that.

He had often told her she was charming, or pretty, but he had never rhapsodised over her as he had rhapsodised over the discovery of Alice.

Of course, Alice was only a model. At least, *was* she only a model? No; Dick had mentioned something to the contrary. She could not remember exactly what it was. He had never told her anything definite, she thought. She, Clare, did not even know how he had made Alice's acquaintance. Since that first rapturous tribute to Alice's perfections, he had been a trifle reticent, she fancied. But she had asked no curious questions, lest he should think—what Clare would not have had him think for worlds.

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Jealous of an artist's model! The thing was preposterous. She could never stoop so low as that. But why, why need he have cast this creature's beauty in her teeth?

* * * * *

Clare turned away from the window with a strange expression in her grey eyes.

"Dick is late—later than usual to-day!" she murmured.

Then she remembered that this was Alice's last day. "That is what is keeping him," she thought. "He will want to make the most of his last opportunity. I wonder—I wonder——"

She stopped suddenly.

"Shall I?" she whispered to herself; and the next moment she had hurried from the room.

Ten minutes later she was standing outside the door of Dick Stanton's studio.

For an instant she paused, in breathless hesitation, with her hand on the latch.

Ought she to have come? Would it not be better to go back and wait for Dick at home? She had once made up her mind never to disturb him at his work. But that was just what she was going to do now.

Why had she come? Really, she was not quite certain. Was it to see Alice—the perfectly beautiful Alice, whom Dick——

Clare hesitated no longer. She threw off her dripping cloak in the narrow vestibule and knocked at the studio door.

"Come in!" cried an impatient voice. It was Dick's; evidently he was by no means well pleased at being thus disturbed.

Clare obeyed the somewhat ungracious invitation.

Dick was standing with his back to her at the far end of the long room, in front of the revolving table upon which "Phyllis and Corydon" had sprung into being.

He did not turn his head at her entrance.

"What is it? What do you want?" the girl heard him say, in a curiously absent voice.

Somehow, it never occurred to her that the questions could be meant for her, and she made no reply, but stood and waited until he should turn his head and see her.

But Dick seemed already to have forgotten the interruption. Unconscious of his visitor, he continued his absorbing inspection of "Phyllis and Corydon," giving a touch of his sensitive fingers here and there, until, satisfied at length, he took a long step back, and then, with a sigh of contentment, threw himself into a chair, the better to contemplate his handiwork.

"Dick!" said Clare softly; but the sculptor did not hear her.

"Dick!" she repeated, and still there was no reply.

She took a step towards him, moving so that she could see his face. At the sight of it all the colour left her cheeks.

She hardly recognised the Dick of her everyday experience.

His face was changed, transfigured by an expression of such absolute rapture as Clare had never seen on any man's face before.

Instinctively her eyes followed the direction of his own.

"Phyllis and Corydon." Two images modelled in cold, dull clay. Clare's blinded eyes saw that, and nothing more. They did not see the exquisite grace and beauty of the work, the poetic delicacy of its conception, the masterly skill of execution.

They only saw—Clare's rival. The apotheosis of all she feared and hated, the thing upon which Dick lavished that measure of his love which he denied to her.

A wild, senseless fury took possession of her.

She flashed one glance at Dick. That was enough. It was "Phyllis and Corydon" who held him enthralled; it was "Phyllis and Corydon"——

A mallet lay among the *débris* of implements, blocks of marble and plaster casts that littered the floor of the studio.

It came within Clare's line of vision.

Then, for one mad moment, the girl lost her self-control.

She seized the mallet, and, with a little inarticulate cry of rage, leapt forward.

There was a dull, soft thud, and the next instant a broken mass of clay lay scattered upon the ground.

The mutilated stumps of "Phyllis and Corydon" stood, calm and impassive, upon their pedestal.

* * * * *

"Why did you do this?" he demanded in a lifeless voice.

"Forgive me!" she cried. "I was mad! I didn't know what I was doing. Oh, forgive me!"

"I don't understand," he said, and shrank from her touch.

She fell on her knees at his feet and covered her face with her hands.

"I was mad—mad!" she sobbed. "And I hated it so!"

"I don't understand," he said again.

"I hated it because—because it had robbed me of you!" cried the girl. "I was mad with jealousy, and—and, Dick, I love you so!"

"And *that* is how you showed your love," he returned, and the simple words stabbed her like a knife.

"For God's sake, Dick, don't speak to me like that! Don't look at me like that!" she moaned.

"Get up, Clare," he said, not roughly, but in the cold, passionless voice that sent a chill to her heart.

She obeyed him, trembling with remorse and fear, and sank into the chair he placed for her.

"Tell me again what you said just now," he commanded. "I am dull of comprehension to-night, or else——"

He passed his hands across his eyes.

"I think I have never really known you, Clare," he said. "So you came here to-night for the purpose of destroying——"

"Oh, no, no! Not that!" she cried. "Not that! It was no deliberate act of mine. Dick, Dick, you can't believe that of me!"

"Why did you come?" he asked.

"I came because—because—oh, shall I ever make you understand? I was miserable, Dick, and sick for the sight of you. I have been jealous always, though you never guessed it—jealous of your art, your work. Then—that woman—Alice; you said she was beautiful, and I—oh, I didn't understand myself. I think I came to—see her—to see—oh, Dick, you will despise me!"

Eagerly, hurriedly, her voice broken with sobs, Clare stammered out her pitiful confession.

He listened patiently, and, in a measure, he understood, because he loved her.

"Clare," he said slowly, "Alice, at least, can be no rival of yours."

Even as he spoke they could hear the shuffle of clumsy footsteps outside in the vestibule, and a woman's voice raised in shrill declamation.

"I tell yer 'e won't mind, silly owl! Knock an' then trot in; that's the way with 'im!"

"Steady on! Don't you be in such a bloomin' 'urry, my dear!" a male voice protested in a lower key.

Dick hurried to the door, but before he could reach it, the owners of the voices appeared within the room.

"Alice!" exclaimed Dick, "what are you doing here? Haven't I told you——"

"All right, guv'nor," interrupted the male visitor apologetically. He was a short, thick-set young man, with a stupid, good-humoured face. "We're off in a minute. She would bring me."

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"'E wanted carryin' in, 'e did," remarked Alice, contemptuously.

Clare looked at the speaker in a kind of dazed wonder.

Was this really Alice, this young woman in the dirty blouse and patent-leather boots, whose language and demeanour savoured of gin shops and the Borough Road? Even to Clare's unpractised eyes, it was clear that the girl had been drinking. Her face was flushed, her utterance thick, and as she stood, she swayed slightly from side to side.

"And yet Dick is right," was the swift thought that followed the first shock imparted by Alice's condition. "In different clothes, and under different circumstances, she would be a lovely creature."

"I can't have you here like this," said Dick shortly. "Take her away at once," he added, turning to Alice's apologetic companion.

"You 'ear that, old lady?" demanded the latter; whereupon Alice remarked that she heard, right enough, and volunteered to push the young man's face in for him if she had any more of *his* sauce.

In the altercation that followed, it transpired incidentally that Alice had brought "her bloke" to the studio in order that he might inspect her counterpart, glorified by the costume of an Arcadian shepherdess.

When Alice's unsteady eye caught sight of the ruins of her glory, she burst into helpless, foolish tears, and was with some difficulty led from the scene by her faithful admirer. And so Dick and Clare were left alone together once more, with the shattered remains of "Phyllis and Corydon" between them.

For a while neither spoke. For her part terrible remorse and anxiety mastered every other thought. But for him the veil had been drawn, and as never before he understood the power, the intensity, and the madness of a strong woman's love.

* * * * * *

"Phyllis and Corydon" were never remodelled, but the next year the artistic world was thrilled by an exquisite masterpiece which had been executed by a hitherto unknown artist; a masterpiece which brought more fame than ever "Phyllis and Corydon" could possibly have done, because inspired by both love and genius. Its title was "Love's Remorse."

Grete Hahn.

FOR ONE MAN'S SAKE.

A Story of Love Triumphant.

"HAROLD! Harold!—you love me, don't you?"

"Love you, Ella!—what a question to ask."

"Well, they say, you know, that perfect love begets perfect confidence. Now, it is because I feel that you are keeping back from me, something which closely concerns both of us, that I ask you the question."

"My dear Ella!—all that you say is very right and true—within limits, but it does not, I think, necessarily follow that because a man withholds anxiety and trouble from the girl he loves, he is, as towards her, wanting in perfect confidence; in the truest and best sense, that is."

"Then it *is* some trouble!" she said quickly.

"I did not say so."

"Ah!—but I know it, Harold. My heart tells me that you are engaged in some desperate undertaking, of which you well know I should not approve."

"Ella!—I assure you that you are needlessly worrying yourself. By this time, surely, you must be aware, that in my business the risks are more than equal to the advantages."

"Yes!—Yes!—but why won't you let me know of and sympathise with your risks, as well as, by and by, share your advantages?"

"Can't you see, dear, that it is kinder to keep you in ignorance of the risks?"

"Not, Harold, if they are avoidable, and will not bear discussion."

"Well, dear, I will go so far as to say that this matter which seems to be troubling your little heart so much, is connected with the note robbery at the Occidental Bank—more I cannot tell you."

There was something in Harold Baxter's manner, something which told of conscious concealment, and which belied the apparent frankness of his partial statement.

It angered the woman who would have laid down her life for him; who had no thought, no hope, no desire, that was not bound up in his life and welfare.

"It is not fair to me!" she cried. "It is cruel to trust me as you would your pet dog!—a piece of sugar now and then, and for the rest—nothing!—I tell you that it is unjust!"

"But Ella!—you misunderstand me!—you——"

"No, I do not, Harold. I understand you only too well, and I warn you, that in spite of your refusal to enlighten me with regard to what I know you intend doing, I *will* find it out, even though it be to my own sorrow."

Ella Rayne was no ordinary girl; being high-minded, and whole-hearted far beyond the average woman of to-day. From her earliest years she had known the pinch of poverty, and but little of the brightness of life. It was only since she had supported herself, and had met with her fate, in the person of Harold Baxter, the smartest young detective of the Criminal Investigation Department, that her way had become more sunny and pleasant, and that the future broadened out with the glory of inexpressible happiness.

A fairer girl, too, it would have been hard to find. Tall, shapely, and with big dark eyes, that, in the liquid, dumb devotion of them, told of a nature as nearly perfect as it was possible for anything human to be, she gave one the impression of absolute trust and truth.

Harold Baxter had in him all that goes to make a fine man, save one thing—a will of his own.

This was extraordinary, considering his profession, for a detective's duties demand as much as skill, strength of will and purpose. But so it was, Harold Baxter's will was as weak as water. He could not easily say no. Obstinate, as we have seen, he could be on occasion, and it was this trait in his dis-

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position, which, in this present instance, was to bring him perilously near to total life-shipwreck and ruin.

For more than a week, the public mind had been full of the latest criminal sensation, viz.—the theft, by some person or persons unknown, of notes to the value of £60,000, from the Occidental Bank, Lombard Street. The thing had been barefaced, having been effected in the middle of the business day, during the luncheon hour.

Clue to the perpetrator, or perpetrators, there was absolutely none, but it was generally held, when the case was put into the hands of Detective Inspector Baxter, that the chances of clearing up the mystery were increased a hundredfold.

As yet he had nothing of importance to report to headquarters. Then a strange thing happened.

This absurd coincidence is what the thief in the bank note robbery of Parr's Bank actually did.

Going home after her interview with her sweetheart, Ella found that since the morning a new inmate had arrived at the boarding establishment of which she was a member.

When she saw him at table, he proved to be a pretentious young fellow of the cuff-and-collar type, and uninteresting to a degree. He went out in the morning about nine, and returned regularly at six, but what his occupation was, nobody had the slightest idea or conception.

To Ella's great annoyance, the newcomer, almost from the first, persisted in favouring her with his particular attentions. Did she run out in the evening for a shopping expedition, or a breath of fresh air, close in her wake sailed Mr. Francis Iles (the name he had given to the proprietress of the establishment), who, with self-assumed impertinence, pestered her with his unwelcome and vulgar chatter.

On the fourth day after his arrival at the house in Brent Street, she had been compelled to make a stand, and to tell him plainly that she did not in any way desire his acquaintance.

It was in the neighbourhood of Oxford Street that the incident occurred.

"No?" he replied, with an abominable leer and wink. "That's bad—for you; for if you only but knew, I could cover you from head to foot with bank-notes, and still have a big lot over."

The word "bank-notes" sent a curious thrill through the girl. She knew of course of her lover's charge of the Occidental Bank case, and, though the connection seemed remote, and even improbable, she felt that, in some way, as yet unexplained, the man at her side was intimately concerned with the crime, and would be eventually unmasked.

Thinking thus, she suddenly resolved to keep friendly with the braggart, with the dim notion that it would be for the ultimate benefit of the man she loved.

"Mr. Iles," she said, "perhaps I was over hasty, and unreasonable just now; I did not mean to be rude to you, and if I said anything which in any way hurt your feelings, I must ask you to forgive me!"

"There!—I knew you didn't mean it when you said it. Of course I'll forgive you. Why shouldn't I? You're such a nice girl, you know, that a fellow would take a lot from you, and think nothing of it."

It was as much as she could do to keep calm, and to persevere in her policy of deception, the man's coarse familiarity was so utterly distasteful and repugnant to her. She braced herself, however, to suffer his company back to Brent Street, and to listen by the way to talk which did not interest her in the least.

Harold was to meet her the following evening, so that she was both surprised and disappointed at finding on her return a note from him, to the effect that business of the most urgent nature would prevent him from keeping the appointment.

Possibly, she might not have attached so much importance to the circumstance, but for the fact of a strange coincidence.

Mr. Francis Iles also received a letter at the same time as did Ella. That in itself was of no great significance, but when, at breakfast the next morning, the new boarder notified the mistress of the house that he should not be home until the small hours, and perhaps not until the next day, Ella's woman's wit saw a gleam of light through the darkness; felt instinctively that she was on the eve of a great discovery, and, with regard to her lover, a great deliverance.

Still, therefore, keeping up a semblance of smiling ignorance, she resolved to follow her new admirer from the moment he left the house in the evening on his mysterious business.

* * * *

On the northern heights of London, between the top of Haverstock Hill and Cricklewood, there is a mean street, left of the main road, and known as Neville Street.

The houses in it are of the broken-down, seen-better-days order, not by any means small, but, on the contrary, of fair size.

It was towards one of these houses that, about half-past eleven on the night after that upon which Ella had received George Baxter's letter, a man, wearing a long, dark inverness cape, and a broad, soft felt hat, made his way, with a caution that showed he feared recognition.

Within the shadow of a builder's gateway crouched a woman, whose ever low-voiced cry was, "Will he come?—Pray Heaven he does not come!"

As she saw the cape-wrapped figure advancing up the street, her heart almost ceased beating, and, as it passed her, she glided out, and noiselessly followed in its make.

It was only when the man had actually mounted the steps of the house he sought, that Ella Rayne awoke to the vital necessity for arresting his further progress.

To her lips sprang the cry that had been choked down in her heart all through the time of weary watch and waiting.

She had not time to stop him.

"Harold! Harold!" she cried. "Harold! stay, for your own sake, and for mine!"

But the net was spread for the bird; the door was on the jar; and even as his love's despairing appeal broke on the still night air, Harold Baxter passed rapidly in, without so much as hearing the voice of her who would have saved him, and—the door was shut.

For the moment she was the woman only, as she leant, broken in spirit, and weakened of limb and brain, against the railings of number nineteen Neville Street, and she sobbed as though her heart would break.

Then, the power in her nature re-asserted itself, and she began to ask herself, how she should gain entrance into this mysterious conference-house.

She could not gain admittance by the front door, so sought some other and surer way of getting in.

It suddenly occurred to her that perhaps, at the bottom of the builder's yard, there might be access to the end garden walls of the houses on that side of the street.

She had already noticed that one of the yard gates had negligently been left unfastened, so that she was free to pass through to the rear of the place.

Once possessed with the idea, she did not hesitate, but gently pushing open the gate, and as gently closing it behind her, she sped lightly up between the stacks of wood, and other building material, to find that the yard at the bottom turned to the left, running along the end garden walls, right up to the houses in the main road.

It was the selection of the right garden that at first puzzled her; things looked so different from the back, than they did from the street, that she realised the danger of scaling the wrong wall. For this was her aim and intention; though what she would do in the moment of emergency, in the face of some peril, terrible, because unknown, she knew not, and did not stop to think.

At last she decided that the seventh garden from the gate.

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way was the one she was in search of. There was not much difficulty in getting to the top of the wall, a small, light ladder lying near at hand affording the means.

It was then she saw a light in the first-floor back; but the blind was down, so that if she made no noise, there was little fear of her being prematurely discovered.

Silently, but with evident effort, Ella drew up the ladder, and lowered it down the inner side of the wall. Descending she found herself in a tangle of neglected vegetation.

There being no moon, she had to feel her way towards the house, her only visible guide being the illuminated window of the first-floor back.

Across the blind she now saw, more than once, human shadows pass and repass. This but stimulated her to renewed exertions, though as yet she had not formed any definite plan for entering the house.

Presently, she came to a door—it was locked. Then she tried the window of the back kitchen, which to her joy she found unfastened.

Now everything seemed clear and straight before her. Softly slipping up the lower sash, she crept through into the room. A few red embers in the grate gave just sufficient light for her to steer her way to the door without displacing the furniture, and so making a noise.

Out in the passage, and at the foot of the stairs, she made out a faint light at the top of the latter, proving conclusively that the conspirators, if conspirators they were, had, for some reason, the door of the back room open.

What should she do? Had those above heard her movements? But her course was settled for her, and on the instant.

A heavy step moved across the upstairs room, and came out into the passage.

"Who's there?" called a harsh, deep voice.

Hearing no word in reply, the speaker called again, louder, and with greater peremptoriness, and insistence, "Who's there? If you don't answer, I'll come down and shoot you like a dog!"

Trembling in every limb, Ella cowered by the side of the kitchen stairs, her stock of nerve and sustaining power well-nigh exhausted.

Down the stairs came the heavy tread. Had the man turned to the right on reaching the bottom, he must have, of a certainty, discovered the intruder. What he did was to move in the direction of the front area door.

This was Ella's opportunity. Without sound or cry, she darted up the stairs and into the room above, to come face to face with Detective George Baxter, and—Mr. Francis Iles.

On the table was a heap of notes and gold, the ultimate destination of which was only too clear to the horrified girl.

"Ella!"

"Harold! don't hesitate!—I know what you were about to do! But I have been strengthened to save you."

"But Ella! how——?"

"Quick!—I charge you, do your duty—quick!—seize that man and handcuff him! You will then have only one to deal with. Quick!—here he comes!"

The craven Iles was soon under steel, Ella's presence seeming to have an instantaneous effect for good upon her weak-minded, tempted lover.

As the greatest danger of all neared him, he felt himself possessed of a lion's strength.

"Get into that corner, Ella!" he said, with the words flinging there the manacled bank clerk.

It was not a second too soon. The man who now appeared in the doorway, was of gigantic build, and though grizzled, was evidently possessed of enormous muscular powers.

Then began a struggle, which to this day is famous in the annals of the "Yard."

"Jim Riley!" said the detective, watching warily, meanwhile, every movement of his adversary, "drop that revolver and surrender yourself as my prisoner."

With literally a howl of rage and disappointment, the big "crook" rushed at George, trying to bear him down by sheer weight.

But quickness of eye and adroitness count for something in such cases, and the detective succeeded in evading the onslaught.

Then, shaking himself free of his opponent, Riley raised his revolver and fired point blank at him.

That had surely been Harold Baxter's last moment on earth, but for a hand, the hand of a woman, that knocked up the weapon, causing the bullet to find its billet in the ceiling.

Swift as lightning Harold saw his advantage, and taking his enemy on the surprise, felled him to the ground with a chair; stunning him, and rendering him incapable of immediate further mischief.

It was the work of an instant only to clap a set of handcuffs upon the temporarily insensible man.

"Ella! run to the street door, and whistle for the man on the beat. Here, take my call!"

A sleepy policeman soon appeared on the scene, and when he had returned with a four-wheeler, the two prisoners were without further trouble soon on their way to Cricklewood police station.

* * * * *

Next day the papers were full of the marvellously clever capture of the Occidental Bank thief and his accomplice by Detective Inspector Baxter. Not a word, however, was said as to the nearly successful bribing of that officer by the prisoners, or of the leading part played by a certain young girl.

Once and once only did he and she talk about it, and that but briefly.

"How did you guess, dear," said he, "that these scoundrels were trying to bribe me from doing my duty?"

"By a sight which I caught of the letter received by Francis Iles—or rather Pacey, the bank clerk—at the same time I got yours postponing our meeting. He dropped it when he left the table, and—and I saw that——"

"What an opinion you must have had of me, Ella!"

"Never mind, now, dear," she said, tenderly, "we will forget it."

"I'm afraid," said Harold, as he held her face between his hands and looked down into her eyes, "I am not worthy of all you went through, dear, for me."

"Will you believe me," she answered him, "when I say that I would do it again, and yet again, with the same object—to save you."

"Ella! you are an angel!—and I——"

"You!—you are just the man to whom, through the future, the angel looks for all the happiness an angel can reasonably expect on earth."

Ralph Enderby.

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CUPID GOES HOUSE HUNTING.

And Does Not Fail to Get His Arrow Home.

"Just when I'm looking my best," declared Florence Donaldson, "there's nowhere to go and no one to see me!"

Her sister-in-law laughed amusedly at this fearless avowal. "One of the cruel fatalities of feminine existence," she observed.

Florence, dressed in her new spring dress, had just run across from the flat opposite to see if she could not inveigle her relative into an afternoon's outing. Young Mrs. Donaldson, however, was too absorbed in the making of a dainty blouse to be lured from the sewing machine.

Flushed and bright-eyed, she was working with an ardour that brooked no interruption.

"Fred wagered that I wouldn't have this finished when he came home to-night, and I'm determined I shall," she informed Florence, pausing just long enough for a swift smile and glance.

"Oh, these young wives!" sighed the girl. "I wonder if I'll ever be so crazy for my husband's approval that I'll stay cooped up indoors on such a radiantly beautiful day as this?"

"Of course you will, Florrie—and you'll take delight in it, too. Love transforms labour, you know."

"So I've heard," remarked Florence, with a grimace; "but that doesn't alter the fact that there's nowhere for me to go this afternoon." She cast a look of mingled vanity and bitterness upon her jaunty self as reflected in the mirror.

"I'm really sorry, dear," murmured the sister-in-law. Then, glancing up suddenly, she beheld Florence fully for the first time.

"Why, you do look lovely, Florrie, I declare! I believe I never saw you look so charming."

The girl made a mock obeisance. "Thank you, Mistress Mabel. I've succeeded at last in wringing a compliment from you. Now, perhaps, you can sympathise." She turned disgustedly from the mirror. "If," she pursued, scornfully, "it happened to be one of my off days, when my hair wouldn't wave, my belt refused to dip and my collars choked me, and if I had decided for once to be miserable and had thrown on the easiest, and consequently the ugliest, dress I could find, every friend I possessed would be dropping in to see me, begging me to go for a drive, or a call, or a pleasure trip of some sort."

"That's usually the case," laughed Mrs. Fred Donaldson. Then she seemed to recollect something. "I declare, Florrie, if you are really anxious for an outing, I can suggest one. Oh, if you just could go it would be such a help. Do you suppose——"

"Let's hear about it," encouraged Florence.

"Well, would you care to combine a business and pleasure trip, and at the same time do me a great favour?"

"Delighted," answered the girl. But her tone was neutral. She would await particulars.

"The matter really ought to be attended to this afternoon. I was going to try somehow to make time for it at the last moment, but you see how impossible that will be."

"Well?"

"You know, Fred and I have been looking up a house for the summer——"

"Oh, for pity's sake!"

"Thank you, my dear, for your readiness to help me."

"I beg your pardon, Mabel. But of all things—house hunting! It's the last thing I imagined."

"I suppose so—but, listen, Florrie. There's only one house to go to—it belongs to one of the university professors. I've already corresponded with him about it, and he is anxious for me to come out and have a look at it. You will be able to tell whether it will suit or not."

"I thought," remarked the girl, "that you said the trip would combine business and pleasure?"

"Now, Florrie, how unkind! Won't it be a pleasure to meet the genial professor?"

"Well, that depends. Is he old or young?"

"Oh, you incorrigible! He's a settled man with a family. They're all going away for the summer, and he wants to let the house for that period. I imagine from the tone of his letters that he is a most amiable gentleman."

Florence meditatively adjusted her hat. It was pretty and creamy, and it had pink roses under the brim.

"If I thought," she mused, "that there was any possibility of there being a nice grown up son in the family——"

"Florence Donaldson, aren't you ashamed! Do take a sensible interest in the matter, for my sake at least. I really wish you would go out and see what the house is like. Of course, if the chief requisites are lacking, we won't consider it. However, I imagine it is just what we want. You know Fred and I are expecting our various relatives to visit us this summer, and we will need a roomy place. The situation is ideal—out near the park, you know, and——"

"Oh, I'll go," laughed Florence, good-naturedly. "Of course I'll go, sister, dear, if you feel that you can trust my judgment. But you must be sure to enumerate all the 'chief requisites' before I go, and not recollect them afterwards."

"Well, there should be a nice lawn—you know how Fred glories in a lawn—and, let me see now—there are three or four other very important items. Sit down while I think."

Florence obeyed. She listened patiently while Mrs. Donaldson recounted the necessary requirements. The "three or four" important points had developed into at least twenty before the interview was ended.

Florence was smiling when she started out on her mission. It was not just the sort of adventure her buoyant spirits craved, but it was at least diverting.

"Shady trees," she repeated to herself, "large verandah, roomy kitchen, gas range, sunny bedrooms," and so on.

She had it all well fixed in her mind when she reached Selborne Street and turned east.

"Yes, the situation was most desirable." So thought Florence when she walked along the pretty avenue, with its rows of comfortable dwellings and its borders of well-kept lawns. All about her was the radiant freshness of awakening summer. The trees had that joyous look which the bursting of new leafage brings, and the grass glowed with the emerald brightness of young and springing green.

Young Mrs. Donaldson's surmise as to the professor's amiability proved correct. He was certainly a genial man. But he was also extremely hard of hearing, so that, in spite of his affability and the charming way in which he made Florence feel at home, there was the immediate drawback of an imperfect understanding between them.

This began when Florence introduced herself, mentioning the fact that there had already been some correspondence concerning the house.

"Ah, certainly, Mrs. Donaldson—I remember quite well. Indeed, I hoped you would come to-day, for there have been other parties looking at the place, and I wanted you to see it before I considered any other proposition."

"I intended to come earlier in the day—that is, my sister did, but she was too busy. It was she who wrote the letters. I am Miss Donaldson."

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"Eh? Oh, yes, yes—so I understood. You and your husband——"

Florence raised her voice. "My brother and my sister," she corrected him, "are the ones who wish to take the house. I came in my sister's stead, as she was too busy. She wished——"

"Eh? Brother and sister coming? Yes, I remember—the letter mentioned that there would be relatives to visit you, and that you desired sufficient room. Well, the house looks big enough, doesn't it? Come and I'll show you through. Mrs. Powell and the girls are out, or they would be glad to assist. However, I think I am well enough acquainted with my own domicile to explain its various merits. Just a word, Mrs. Donaldson, before we go any further. Since writing you something has occurred which makes our plan of leaving for the summer not quite so definite as it was. There will be some uncertainty for at least three or four days. Then I can let you know. Meanwhile, you might as well see the place."

Rather than struggle further to correct his mistaken impression of her identity, Florence let the matter drop. There was no use being particular about it, especially as the affair was so uncertain. There was time enough for him to discover his error when circumstances should make it necessary.

So she followed him through the rooms, taking mental note of the important features and smilingly answering to the name of Mrs. Donaldson. She herself talked very little, for she felt disinclined to exert herself sufficiently to make him understand her.

"And now you must see our back garden. Pardon me if I say it, but it's the pride of the family. We flatter ourselves that the rear of our home is quite as attractive as the front."

They passed from the dining-room upon a broad, shaded verandah. A beautifully kept lawn stretched before them. Adjoining it was a tennis court, where two young men were at play.

Florence had so completely forgotten her jest regarding a possible grown-up son that she was genuinely taken by surprise when Professor Powell exclaimed: "Ah, there's my boy Will at the game again. Pretty good player, eh? That Ellis fellow's a good one, too. They're both fiends when it comes to outdoor sports."

Florence judged as much from the appearance of both young men. They were well tanned and muscular. The taller of the two had a really handsome face, but Florence liked the other countenance better. There was something decidedly winning in its expression, and the eyes were clear and direct in their glance. She noticed that young Powell looked more than once towards the verandah where she stood with his father.

The girl expressed herself as delighted with the grounds. "I'm sure my sister will be pleased," she assured the Professor. Of course he did not catch the real significance of her remark, and she felt the same hopelessness in regard to enlightening him.

Indoors once more, Professor Powell had a sudden recollection.

"I declare! The Seymours are going away for the summer. There's no uncertainty about that. Suppose you go over and look at their place? They wish to let it furnished, the same as we do. I think it would be wise, for in case we don't go, you might be able to arrange with them. Come to the window, I'll show you the house."

The sound of a screen door closing rather noisily in the next room caused both to turn. A glimpse of tennis flannels was visible in the shaded dining-room.

"Hallo, Will—is that you?"

"It is," answered a masculine voice that tried not to seem embarrassed.

"Will, will you show this young lady where the Seymours' house is? She came to see about our place, you know, and——"

Young Powell needed no urging. He emerged very readily from the dining-room.

"It seems to me that you left that game rather suddenly," observed his father, with a mischievous twinkle in his eye. "But the joke is on you, young man, for it's Mrs.—and not Miss, as you no doubt imagined it would be."

Florence felt the stirring of her feminine vanity as she saw the unmistakable disappointment in the young man's face.

"My son, Will—Mrs. Donaldson."

Oh, that wretched blunder? But how was she to explain it now? The professor would think it strange that she had allowed him to go so far uncorrected. It was too late, evidently, for such an explanation. Further words would only complicate matters.

On the way to the Seymours', young Powell was very attentive. When a young woman has dancing brown eyes and wears a hat with pink roses under the brim it is difficult for a young man to act otherwise, even when he is aware that she prefixes Mrs. to her name.

The Seymour residence was fully as attractive as the Powells'. Florence was sure it would prove satisfactory, in case the latter family decided to remain in town.

"And now," said young Powell, as they retraced their steps, "we've got things ready for any emergency. You and your husband——"

Florence could stand it no longer.

"Oh, don't please!" she burst forth. "I haven't any husband!" And then she explained it all to the amazed young fellow.

He laughed with her over the ridiculous mistake. His laugh sounded particularly light-hearted.

"I've taken you so far out of your way," he apologised; "we're a long distance from the station. It is much nearer now to go across to Cottage Grove avenue. The walk will be pleasant. If you don't object, I'll accompany you."

Florence did not object.

"You live with your sister?" he inquired, as he swung along by her side.

"No; but I'm in the same building. We live in a flat."

"You—you see her often then, don't you?"

"Y—yes; I presume so."

"I hope father will stay in town. People are foolish to leave this pretty place for the summer. I tell you, it's all bosh, this rushing off to out-of-the-way places where one doesn't find the conveniences and pleasures that he could enjoy at home. Think of the parks, and the drives."

Florence agreed with him. Never before had anyone presented the matter to her quite so convincingly.

The walk seemed a very brief one, after all. Will Powell could not but remark it.

"We'll let you know in two or three days about our decision," he told Florence as they stood waiting for her car. "I hope your sister will like the Seymour place."

Then, as he put her on the car: "Good-bye, I'm glad I met you. And, do you know, I'm awfully glad you're not—Mrs. Donaldson.

Florence could not be angry with him, somehow. She tried to frown, but the attempt broke up into a merry laugh.

Will Powell had his wish. The professor decided to remain and Mrs. Donaldson—the real Mrs. Donaldson—was delighted with the Seymour residence.

Young Powell called personally to make known his father's decision. And he managed to see Florence, although his business was with her sister-in-law.

"What in the world did he talk about all that time?" inquired the latter suspiciously, when at last he had gone.

"Oh, lots of things—tennis, and golf, and outdoor sports. I shall take them up this summer, Mabel. You know it is just what I need."

Mrs. Fred Donaldson smiled knowingly. "There's nothing like having an incentive," she observed. And Florence blushed.

Angela Morgan.

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THE CONFESSIONS OF CYNTHIA.

Revelations in High Life by a Lady's Companion.

The writer of this series of true stories acted for many years in the capacity of lady's companion to a Society adventuress who lived by robbing her unsuspecting guests. Names have, for obvious reasons, been altered, but the facts are correct.

THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

Mrs. NORTON	An adventuress who makes her money by robbing her friends.
CYNTHIA	Her cousin and companion who, when the events related below took place, was quite unsuspicious of Mrs. Norton's guilt.
FLUFFY	An accomplice of Mrs. Norton's.
LORD KINROSS	One of Mrs. Norton's most devoted admirers.
SIR JOHN STRICKLAND	A poor baronet who is deeply in love with Mrs. Norton.
MARY VERNON . . .	At one time engaged to be married to Lord Kinross.
HIRAM PETTIGREW .	An American millionaire.
PERCIVAL HOPE . . .	Pettigrew's secretary.
CASELLIS	A man from Jamaica who knows Mrs. Norton's past history.

Mrs. Norton: Adventuress.

Cynthia: Her companion.

THE RETURN OF PETTIGREW.

THE STORY STARTS HERE.

I arrive in England from a Bruges convent to be companion to my cousin, Frances Norton, whom I have not seen since we were together at school, and discover that my cousin is taking part in midnight card games, at which large sums of money are being lost and won. The climax is reached one night when Mary Vernon stakes her diamond earrings (a gift from Lord Kinross), and one of the onlookers finds them to be paste. The diamonds, it appears, were stolen by my cousin.

A few weeks later, my cousin, with Fluffy's help, succeeds in stealing a pocket-book, containing about eight thousand pounds in paper money, from Hiram Pettigrew, an American millionaire at the Café Regal, by substituting for the millionaire's pocket-book one exactly like it.

We next move into a house in Pont Street, and it is while here that Sir John Strickland, a poor baronet, proposes to Frankie, and is refused.

Frankie is next presented at Court by her friend, Lady Gaveston. For this function she wears some superb diamonds which have been lent her by Lord Kinross. The society papers declare her to be the most beautiful and best-dressed woman at the presentation.

The same evening Lord Kinross calls at Pont Street for a private interview, and it is during this interview that Percival Hope enters the room unannounced, and makes the startling statement that Mary Vernon has discovered the thief who stole her diamonds. Shortly afterwards Frankie leaves the room; but I stay, and, unknown to Kinross and Percival Hope, overhear Hope, who turns out to be Kinross' cousin, tell Kinross that in a fortnight's time he will prove to Kinross that Frankie is an adventuress living upon the proceeds of the robbery of her friends. I tell Frankie what I have overheard.

On the evening of the next day Lady Gaveston tells Frankie that she doesn't approve of her behaviour towards Sir John Strickland, and that unless she decides at once either to marry or refuse him, she will return to Scotland. My cousin asks for and obtains a fortnight's grace in which to make up her mind.

We now all go to the Derby, where Mrs. Curtis Blount, instigated by jealousy, entices me to bet heavily, by which I lose £800. Frankie has also lost heavily, and to pay our debts, she prevails upon a young fellow, by promising marriage, to sign his uncle's name to a bill for £5,000.

That same night, at the Duchess of Warminster's ball, my cousin comes face to face with a man from Jamaica who knows all about her past life. Percival Hope has brought him in. It is a critical moment, but once again Frankie scores. She persuades me, much against my will, to engage Hope's attention by making love to him, while she herself purchases the Jamaica man's silence. He agrees to be silent for the sum of £1,000 to be paid before noon on the following day. I have to go to Fluffy's chambers to get the money. It is past midnight, and while negotiating with Fluffy, Percival Hope bursts into the room. Fluffy saves the situation by telling him that I have come to get money to pay my debts, whereupon Hope immediately forwards me £1,000.

The next day marks the end of the fortnight, during which Hope was to obtain proofs of Frankie's guilt. He and Kinross arrive with Casellis at Pont Street, and Casellis is asked to say what he knows of Frankie's dark past, but, instead of disclosing any unpleasant facts, he swears that she is a perfectly innocent woman.

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THIS WEEK'S INSTALMENT.
The Return of Pettigrew.

For a moment the half-caste faced Percival's steady look unmoved, his dark eyes, flashing with passion, fearlessly met the challenge in that steel cold concentrated gaze, but—it was only for one short, silent moment.

The next, he had collapsed. He was once more a cringing, servile specimen of yellow-skinned humanity, bowing before the storm of execration, threats and menaces that broke over his head.

He attempted no excuse, offered no explanation for his conduct. He had sworn falsely, and if needs be, must suffer for so swearing.

"His object in making such infamous charges?" This last from Kinross.

"He had none," with a shrug. "Men were evil sometimes—in Jamacia, at all events—without an object."

"Let him go," said Frankie, "I don't blame *him*, he was only the tool of another and more unscrupulous man." She pointed the remark with a contemptuous glance at Percival, without, however, at all disturbing that inflexible person.

After his first outbreak against Casellis he remained quite calm. From playing a prominent part in the proceedings he relapsed for the time being into a spectator. He made no demur when Kinross insisted that Casellis should sign a confession of false witness, and smiled in an easy fashion when the half-caste declared he had been bribed to speak.

Cool and impassive, Percival waited till the confession was duly signed, and the door closed behind the man from Jamaica. Then with a terrible persistence he returned to the charge.

"My first witness has broken down," he remarked. "I will call the next."

Kinross quickly interposed.

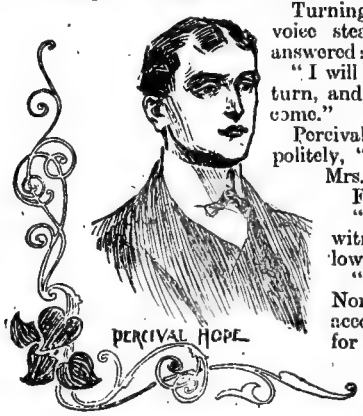
"No more, thank you," he said angrily. "I don't propose to subject Mrs. Norton to further insults."

"It is not for you to decide whether we shall go further into the matter this afternoon," said Percival. "I have three points against Mrs. Norton. One only has been raised. It remains for her to say whether the other two shall be heard now or later."

He spoke without a tinge of temper or bitterness. He might have been a judge, I thought, or a state executioner.

Frankie could not restrain a nervous shiver as she listened. He was so strong, so implacable, untouched by her charms, indifferent to her beauty, superior to all her arts—ruthless and indomitable as Fate.

From him she glanced to Kinross with a touch of appeal. There was no reassurance in his Lordship's face. He was indignant for her and against Hope, but behind the indignation the old doubt, the old suspicion rankled still. She must go through the ordeal to the end.



Turning to Percival, in a voice steady as his own, she answered:

"I will hear your witnesses in turn, and confute them as they come."

Percival bowed and asked politely, "if he might ring for Mrs. Norton's maid."

Frankie smiled sweetly.

"Certainly—are all your witnesses culled from the lower classes, Mr. Hope?"

"By no means, Mrs. Norton. I have taken account of your predilection for the aristocracy."

With an exclamation Kinross started to his feet.

"This is *too* much!" he cried, glaring at Percival.

Frankie leant forward, clutching his arm.

"Bear with him patiently a little longer," she said quietly, "for *my* sake." She still held his arm as though fearful of his powers of self-restraint. Kinross flushed, faltered, and finally sat down.

Ella Martin entered the room in a tearful and terrified manner. Much confused, she glanced from Percival to Frankie, twisting her apron in many and divers shapes,

"Listen attentively, please," said Percival, "and answer my questions slowly and carefully."

The girl trembled and remained quiet only with an effort.

"You told me last week that you had reason to suspect a certain person of stealing the photograph of Miss Vernon's diamonds from your box?"

"I did, sir."

"Who is the person you suspect?"

"My mistress, Mrs. Norton. Please, Mr. Hope——"

He stopped her with an imperative gesture.

"Don't interrupt! You can say anything you wish later. You told me, I think, that the day after you showed Mrs. Norton the print you missed it from your box, and that you afterwards saw it——"

"Oh, Mr. Hope, I *must* speak. I—I—" she paused, red and white by turns. "It's quite true," she went on with a gasp, "I said all that, and I believed it every word, but——"

Percival Hope remorselessly cut her short.

"Since then you have discovered how kind and generous a mistress Mrs. Norton can be?" he sneered.

"I have discovered something else besides," said Ella, with spirit. "I have found the missing print," and she held up the photograph of Mary Vernon's jewels.

"I found it in my box this morning, not an hour ago. It had got pushed among a packet of letters, and in going through them I discovered it."

"Most satisfactory and extremely interesting," sneered Percival. "Was there any special reason for searching your box this morning?"

"I am leaving Mrs. Norton to-morrow, sir. I am going to be married."

Percival smiled.

"That explains many things," said he. Then, with a sudden change of manner, he turned to Frankie.

"Can you explain *this*?" he asked abruptly. "This letter from Messrs. Newland, the jewellers in Oxford Street? Listen—and, if you can, explain.

"'We are in receipt of your letter and photograph of earrings, but regret we are unable to execute a replica of same in paste. Please find print duly inclosed.'

"Well," he jeered, "can you answer that?"

"The letter was never sent to me," said Frankie firmly.

Percival flashed a look at Ella.

"You found this letter?" he demanded.

"Yes——"

"In Mrs. Norton's room at Lady Winchin's, some few days after you missed the print?"

"Yes, sir."

"Fairly conclusive evidence, I think, Mrs. Norton."

"That the letter was found in my room, or to be exact, in my desk, yes, but not that it was addressed to me. Look"—she pointed to the sheet of paper, "a piece has been torn off the bottom. The name and address of the person to whom the firm were writing is missing. When you took this letter from my desk to sell to Mr. Hope"—she turned quickly to Ella—"what name was written there?"

Her attitude was full of menace, and her voice cut like a knife. But the girl made no haste to answer, while she grew whiter and whiter, and her lips seemed unwilling to shape the words.

"Miss Mary Vernon," she said hoarsely, "that was the name."

"It is not true," cried Percival, roused at last. "Upon my soul, I swear it is not true."

"It is your witness, not mine, who speaks," returned Frankie. "If you challenge a part, you must challenge all

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she says. Would you like to know how and why I came to take charge of the letter—*Mary's* letter—or have you heard enough?"

It was some moments before Percival replied. He was very pale, and had, I think, hard work to master himself. When at last he spoke it was in his usual quiet tones—

"For the present 'yes.' For the future——"

Frankie passionately interrupted him.

"I shall never again refer to Mary's connection with the matter," she said indignantly, "and if at any time you state what has been disclosed concerning her, this afternoon, I shall declare such statement to be a malicious invention on your part. If I can help it neither you nor anyone shall breathe a word against her—I have your promise?"—she turned to Kinross—"to be silent?"

"Not a word shall pass my lips," he answered gravely.

"Then"—she faced Percival with superb assurance—"I can defy you, Mr. Hope. Mary's reputation is not likely to suffer from your unsupported testimony."

My cousin's challenge passed unnoticed. Percival, eyeing her steadily, held his peace. But he pocketed the letter from Messrs. Newlands.

Ella's dismissal in a flood of tears was hastened by a sharp ring and a thundering knock at the front door.

"For me—I think," said Percival, colouring slightly.

A moment later and there entered, unannounced and in great haste, Hiram Pettigrew!

His greetings were general and effusive.

"My dear Mrs. Norton, this *is* a pleasure. Percival, my boy, how are you? I came up this morning from Southampton, drove to your rooms, and found your note requesting me to come here straight away. Miss Cynthia, you're looking blooming. Fit as ever Kinross? That's right, I'm glad to see you all."

At this moment Lord Chesterton made his appearance. He listened to the millionaire's oration, then made his way quietly to Frankie.

"I got Hope's note," he said, "and came along at once. What's up?"

"Mr. Hope's giving a surprise party, I should say," laughed Frankie. "I didn't know you or Mr. Pettigrew were coming, Lord Chesterton, though of course I'm charmed to see you both."

"It's about that pocket-book of mine," said Hiram, shaking hands. "I gather that Percival has got hold of a clue to some of the contents. He rather thinks you can help him."

Percival nodded. "Yes," he said, "Chesterton can be of great help. I should perhaps apologise for conducting investigations here, but as Mrs. Norton was present when the robbery took place, I thought she might like to assist at the recovery of some of the stolen porperty."

"Charmed," murmured Frankie, with a self-possession equal to his own. "Most thoughtful of you."

Chesterton looked puzzled and a little annoyed. He scented a disturbance in the social atmosphere, and resented his inclusion therein. Of all things he disliked "a scene."

"I have unfortunately been unable to trace the majority of the missing notes," continued Percival. "Those that have reached the Bank of England have been presented by apparently respectable people, who were able to account for their possession in a legitimate manner. The notes would appear to have been taken to the continent and there distributed. Some few, however, changed hands on a race-course. Of these I have been able to trace two—each for £500."

He glanced sharply at Frankie, but she never moved a muscle.

"The notes were paid in by a bookmaker in a large way of business. He informs me that to the best of his recollection he received them, with others, from Lord Chesterton in settlement of bets on the Derby. You would assist me greatly Chesterton if you could recall how those particular notes came into your hands?"

Chesterton smiled in a large, tolerant fashion.

"Same way as most notes—from my bank, I suppose," he said.

"Pardon me, most distinctly *not* from your bank. No concern could or would pay over to a client a note stopped by the Bank of England."

"Then," said Chesterton carelessly, "I'm afraid I can't help you. I've a terrible memory."

"Let me assist it. The bookmaker tells me you paid these notes on behalf of a lady. Possibly the lady herself gave them to you?"

"Possibly," returned Chesterton, unmoved.

Percival began to grow impatient.

"I am determined to thrash this matter out," he said. "If you will not give up the information privately, you will have to do so in public."

"No power on earth can make me say anything I do not choose," replied Chesterton.

"I admire your chivalry. Believe me it is misplaced. The lady will not thank you for your reticence. She does not court publicity."

Hope spoke with a determination that frightened me. I did not understand why he wished to find out the name of the woman whose bets Chesterton had paid, and I could see no possible connection between the notes handed to his lordship and those stolen from Pettigrew's pocket-book. It was no business of Percival's, and yet——

Chesterton's eyes met mine in a steady and scrutinising fashion. I don't know what he read in them, alarm or perhaps appeal.

"Look here, Hope," he said, "you're going too far. Take my advice, keep the lady out of the question." There was the suggestion of a threat in his voice, but Percival, an ugly look on his face, sneered in reply.

"Thanks, I don't stand in need of your advice. I want something of more value—the truth. You paid that money to Bell on behalf of Mrs. Norton, from whom you got the notes. Deny it if you dare?"

"I do. Mrs. Norton did *not* hand me the notes."

"Who then?" asked Percival, jeering in open disbelief.

For a moment there was silence, to me an awful silence. Then with a great fear at my heart, I forced myself to speak.

"I gave Lord Chesterton the notes. He paid them to Bell for me a day or two ago."

"*You!*" cried Percival, dismay and horror depicted on his face. Then pulling himself together he laid his hand on Pettigrew's shoulder.

"Ask her," he said. "I can't."

Chesterton, who had made his way over to my side, smiled reassuringly.

"Good little girl," he said softly. "Don't be afraid. Buck up and tell the truth. Where did you get the notes from, Cynthia?"- said Hiram. "Did—did your cousin give them to you?"

In a flash I understood what it all meant. Percival was trying to prove that Frankie was a thief. *Frankie*, when all the time——

"My cousin," I said in a loud voice, "No, it was *you*," and I pointed straight at Percival, "you bought my shares the night I was at Fluffy's for £1,000. You gave me two bank notes each for £500. Those same notes I handed to Lord Chesterton."

There was an instant and an indescribable confusion.

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Every one seemed to talk at once. Frankie, I remember, laughed at Hope in an insolent and triumphant manner, and Kinross glared at him defiantly.

Pettigrew's voice hushed the others into silence.

"What did you do with the notes when you came home, Miss Cynthia?" he asked.

"I asked Frankie to take care of them, but she refused. She told me not to let them out of my sight. I had the notes under the mattress that night, and carried them about with me next day, until I gave them to Lord Chesterton."

"Did you look at the numbers of the notes?"

I shook my head.

"No, I only saw they were for £500."

"Perhaps somebody came in your room during the night, and—and interfered with the notes," broke in Percival. "Did you hear anybody?"

The recollection of that fancied step outside my door, the gliding figure at my bedside returned to me. What if they had not been fancy after all? I hesitated. Percival eagerly noting the pause, urged me again.

"Think," he said, "for Heaven's sake think. Don't you understand?" He came quite close to me in his agitation. "The pocket-book—you found it under your chair. These notes were in it—these notes——"

"You gave them me," I cried. "You gave them me."

Percival shook his head.

"They are not the same," he said. "I entered the numbers of the notes I handed you, here in my pocket-book. They do not correspond with those you gave Lord Chesterton."

"Then, then," I said bewildered, "oh, you don't think I stole the notes, you can't think that? I never touched the pocket-book, I never saw—" I broke off in dismay. The green and silver book that I had found hidden in my box rose up before me. I was speechless.

Once again Pettigrew intervened.

"Have you any reason to suppose that the notes were tampered with during the night?" he asked.

I shook my head. I could not tell this keen-faced man of figures that had resolved themselves into window curtains, steps that had proved themselves a dream.

"When did you enter the number of the notes you paid my cousin, Mr. Hope?" asked Frankie. "At the time, or the next day?"

He seemed positively pleased at the question.

"The next day," he said.

"You might perhaps have remembered incorrectly."

He passed over the sneer and answered gravely: "Perhaps."

"It seems to me," said Kinross, "that there's a mystery in connection with the notes, and the sooner we recognise it as such the better—eh, Mr. Pettigrew?"

"Certainly," said the millionaire. He smiled very kindly at me, patting my shoulder.

I did not dare lift my eyes, but stood the picture of guilt before them all.

"I propose a vote of confidence in Cynthia," continued Kinross, laughing.

"I second that," said Chesterton.

They all said nice things to me, but there was a sense of constraint about them all the same. Pettigrew left soon after, and Chesterton accompanied him.

Percival turned deliberately to Kinross.

"Are you coming?" he said slowly.

For a moment Kinross hesitated. He knew all that the question meant. He had signified his intention of proposing to Frankie should she come scatheless through the afternoon's ordeal. She had done so, had vindicated herself and her position. Why then should he pause? By all the laws of honour his place was there beside her, beside the woman who had gone through so terrible an hour to win his love.

Frankie drew a hard, deep breath. The suspense seemed more than she could bear.

Kinross turned, and, with his usual grace, lifted her hand.

"I am staying, Percival," he answered, "always!"

"I congratulate you—both!" was the quiet reply.

And then the door closed behind him. Frankie had won.

I followed close on Percival, leaving my cousin and Lord Kinross to themselves.

I met Lady Gaveston on the stairs just returned from the Flower Show. She had captured a bargain in the way of pelargoniums, and was eager to show off her purchase. She dragged me to her room in triumph, and I had to listen to a long and rambling account of the warfare that had raged between her and a "painted creature" relative to their price.

"That reminds me," her Ladyship fixed me with her glasses, "I met young Ffolliott this afternoon. He had taken far more strong drink than is good for any Christian. I testified to him upon the evils of intemperance, I trust with good results. I can't think what's come to him, he used to be a decent laddie. Can you imagine, Cynthia, he spoke this afternoon of marrying your cousin? I could have boxed his ears. Such impudence! A child like that without a penny! Frances must be careful, gossip so soon gets spread! She must stop the boy."

I nodded, and, making an excuse of fetching water for the pelargoniums, escaped from the room.

My head was splitting, I felt unutterably humiliated and disgraced by all I had gone through, and milady's news of Toby came as a fresh blow.

My mind for the moment was more full of Toby's worries than my own.

The affair of the notes seemed too hopeless a mystery ever to be fathomed. In despair of finding a solution I turned to other things, but all the time, like the strain of some haunting melody, the memory of those midnight footsteps coming and going at my door came back to me.

I felt no surprise at meeting Toby in the hall, and milady's words had more or less prepared me as to the condition he was in.

The boy was very excited and extremely obstinate. He declared he would not leave the house without seeing Frankie. He was engaged to her, going to marry her, had every right to see and speak to her.

"Every right!" he repeated, holding tight to the dining-room door.

I felt infinitely distressed and ashamed for him. At any moment Kinross or Frankie might emerge from the drawing-room. I trembled to think of what might follow.

"You can't see Frankie now," I urged. "Come later, there's a good boy!"

No; he would stay and wait till she was disengaged.

It was no good to argue with him, the chances were that further opposition would result in an unpleasant scene.

"Will you be quiet if I let you wait? Promise me you will stay in the morning-room till I fetch you?"

He promised, and I pioneered him safely to Frankie's cosy nest.

"Not here!" he said abruptly. "No, I can't stay here. I'll wait in the dining-room if you like, though I don't see why she can't come to me now."

I looked at him reproachfully. He flushed and moodily retraced his steps.

Finally he retired into the dining-room and collapsed into a large arm-chair.

I shut the door carefully, conscious of having overcome a great danger—if not to me to my cousin. Somehow, I felt myself more than ever identified with Frankie.

I wished Lord Kinross would go, that I might learn the result of the all-important interview. He must, I thought, have proposed, and she of course would accept him. Surely her success was assured, nothing stood in her way save Toby.

Close on the thought came a knock at the door. A minute later I heard a man's voice in the hall—a voice that sent all the castles I had built for Frankie toppling to the ground.

It was Sir John! In a flash I remembered that the fortnight was over, the fate of the mine was sealed. He had come for Frankie's answer.

What would that answer be?

[*Frankie's answer, among other things, is recorded in next Tuesday's issue.*]

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A Case of Exchange.

Telling of a Red Sunshade, a Bull, and a Picture.

"This," said David Musgrave, R.A., as he sat, his battered straw hat cocked over his nose, and the smoke curling up in blue spirals from his pipe—"this is what one may call real enjoyment, with nobody to know one and come bothering round."

He was sitting just where the uplands slope away from the plantation—sketching. Presently, with a few last finishing strokes, he closed his book, and raising his eyes, looked about him.

A girl was approaching across the green slope of the meadow, a dainty figure in white, with a red sunshade upon her shoulder.

As he watched her, thinking how well the note of colour told against the green background, he saw her suddenly pause to look behind her, and then come flying towards him, dropping the sunshade as she ran. She was close upon him when she tripped and fell, and looking beyond her David Musgrave became aware of a great black bull that had checked its furious career to gore and worry the red sunshade.

Without hesitation, therefore, he leapt forward, and catching up the girl in his arms, fairly ran with her towards the gate, nor did he stop until they were safe on the other side, and looking back saw the bull stroll complacently off with the wreck of the red sunshade upon his horns.

David Musgrave turned to where the girl stood trembling beside him, and laughed reassuringly.

"Rather lucky for us that he stayed to pay his respects to your sunshade."

His companion was silent for a moment, and then stretched out her hand to him.

"Oh, thank you," she said earnestly, "thank you more than I can ever say. I don't know how I came to fall, but I was so frightened I thought I should have died when I heard him thundering behind me. He is a prize bull, you know," she continued, "they usually keep him tied up, he is so dreadfully fierce."

As they walked Musgrave had leisure to note the masses of sunny hair that had escaped their fastenings, the big grey eyes that peeped at him beneath dark lashes, and the lithe activity of the graceful, girlish figure.

"Don't you think we might sit down for a little while?" he said, seeing how her hands still trembled. "You see," he continued, "I feel quite—er—quivery, don't you know!"

"You hardly look it," she said with a smile, her eyes upon his bronzed face, "but still, as you say so, and as I most certainly am, why——" As she spoke she sank down at the foot of a tree and rested her back against the bole.

"Do you know," pursued Mr. David Musgrave, seating himself beside her with a matter of fact sort of air, "that really and truly I have a kind of affection for that bull?"

"I'm afraid I don't quite understand!" she said with a note of indignation in her voice.

"Well, you see," he explained, "if it had not been for him I should not be sitting here with you, for which alone I shall owe him the gratitude of a lifetime!"

"Then your gratitude is easily earned."

"I don't know," he demurred, "if you knew how fearfully—er—lonely—yes, lonely I felt sitting there all by myself."

"You are a stranger to this part of the country?" she asked after a pause.

"Yes!"

"And an artist?"

"Yes," he repeated, "that is, I paint things, you know, and that reminds me, I should like to paint you."

She glanced away across the meadows, all golden with the afternoon sunshine.

"Father collects pictures," she said irrelevantly, "he has a lot of David Musgrave's."

"Really!" said her companion.

"Yes, and he's awfully proud of them," she continued, "though I can never understand why, because I think Musgrave's pictures are awful things, so—so—splashy—don't you?"

"Well—no," he replied, "to be perfectly candid with you, I rather like them—splashes and all."

"Oh, I suppose he's clever enough," she admitted.

"Undoubtedly!" said Mr. David Musgrave.

"Still, I don't like his work one bit. 'Impressionism' doesn't appeal to me."

"I'm rather sorry for that, you know," he said, with covert smile.

"Why?"

"Oh, well, you see, I paint rather like him—in a way."

She flushed suddenly.

"But you—you are not—who are you?" she demanded.

"Brown is my name," he replied mendaciously, "and," he added, stretching out a sunburnt hand and wrist, "brown is my nature."

For a moment she doubted, until seeing how calmly his glance met hers, her fears were allayed, and rising presently they strolled on together over the golden meadows.

"I was rather afraid I had 'put my foot into it' just now," she said at length, pausing beside a creeper-covered gate.

"Which after all wouldn't have been a very serious matter—it isn't so *very* large, you know," he replied, glancing down at the little tan shoe, which immediately hid itself. "No," he continued, "my name is Brown, and I want to paint you."

"And mine," she said, "is Gwendoline Bladon, and—and—if you want to, so very much——"

"When?" he asked quickly as she paused, "and where?"

"Oh!" she answered lightly, "that is for Chance and the Fates to decide," and with an airy wave of the hand she turned and was gone up the path.

"Fresh as the morning," he said to himself as he walked slowly back to the inn where he had taken rooms under the name of "Brown"—"with wonderful eyes and glorious hair, most certainly I must paint her!"

Thus it was he haunted the lanes all next day—but without success.

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However, on the third day, chancing to pass the paddock-gate, he spied her in the orchard beyond, and paying small heed to the notice warning off trespassers, approached her, unheard upon the grass. She was sitting in a low chair beneath a great, gnarled old apple tree, reading. Upon her head was a big white sunbonnet that was pushed back so that he could see the red glory of her hair.

He paused a moment with an eye only for the delicate colouring and wonderful harmony of the tints.

"Just the thing," he said to himself, "if I only had a canvas here!" Then he stepped forward and lifted his hat.

"Good morning, Miss Bladon," he said.

The girl started and looked up.

"Oh, good morning, Mr. Brown!" she replied, "How you startled me, and what are you doing here, of all places?"

"Chance and the Fates have sent me to claim your promise."

"But"—she hesitated—"in this old sunbonnet?" and she made a gesture as if to remove it.

"No—no!" he cried, laying a restraining hand upon her arm—"it is just perfect—just as I want you."

"But supposing anyone sees us—what will they think?"

"Pooh!" he answered, "just let them think what they like—only promise to sit and wait until I fetch a canvas and things, and I'll begin at once—now promise!"

Gwendoline promised, whereupon without more ado he turned and fairly ran back to the village in his eagerness.

In less than a quarter of an hour he was back again, yet as he laid his hand upon the gate he paused, for a tall young fellow clad in immaculate flannels was lounging upon the grass beside the low chair.

Mr. David Musgrave seldom let anything interfere with him, thus it was that his pause was but momentary. The next he had opened the gate and approached them, an easel and canvas under one arm, and a much-battered paint-box beneath the other.

"I'm very sorry, but I—I really can't come," she was saying.

"But you promised to come to the regatta," returned her companion, "and besides"—here he paused as his eyes encountered the figure of David Musgrave.

The girl's cheeks flushed as the two men exchanged glances, and she rose.

"Let me introduce you," she said—

"Mr. Brown—Mr. Wilson."

"Delighted!" said Musgrave, R.A. alias Brown—"lovely weather we're having!"

The tall young fellow bowed stiffly without answering, while Musgrave ran on pleasantly about the crops—the long-continued drought, and the possibility of rain, busying himself the while upon settling his easel.

"What does all this mean?" asked Mr. Wilson at length, looking from the severe face of the artist to the flushed cheeks of the girl.

"I told you I was going to have my portrait painted," she replied, with a note of hesitation in her voice.

"Which was perfectly true," said Musgrave, unstrapping his stool.

"But you promised to let me row you to the regatta?" continued Mr. Wilson, paying no heed to the last remark.

"My dear sir," put in Musgrave again, squeezing some rose-madder upon his palette, "if I may answer for Miss Bladon, I should say—with pleasure—upon some other occasion!"

The tall young fellow in boating flannels scowled for a moment, and opened his lips as if to speak, then, raising his hat, turned upon his heel and left them.

"I should not be surprised," said Musgrave, as he began painting with strong, firm strokes, "if our friend has gone away with his soul possessed of a bitter anger towards me, because, you know, it certainly was rough on him."

The which surmise was quite correct, for Mr. Wilson, having reached his house, was at that precise moment busied upon a letter to Sir George Bladon, in which the words "low artist fellow" occurred with a singular frequency.

Mr. David Musgrave was a quick worker while the fit lasted, and it was upon the third evening of the "sitting" that he sat putting on the last few finishing touches to the wonderful face that looked out from his canvas.

"Yes, I think it will do, you know," he said, looking at it through half-closed lids.

"And what shall you call it?" asked Gwendoline.

"Well, I think of naming it 'The Long Sought,' or something of that kind."

"'The Long Sought,'!" she repeated, "what a very strange title!"

"But a very true one," he answered.

"But what does it mean?" she asked.

"Ah! that is what few will understand," he answered, and there was a long silence, during which his brush hovered lightly here and there.

"Our friend, Mr. Wilson, is an excellent young man," he said at last.

"You think so?" she answered listlessly.

"Yes; but he has one fault—jealousy."

"Nonsense!" she said, glancing at him with heightened colour.

"Perhaps you are right," he answered, "in which case it is surprising how very different we are—he and I."

"Of course you are," she said decidedly; but how do *you* mean?"

"Oh, well, I am jealous—fearfully jealous, you know!" Somehow as he spoke her eyes drooped, and she changed the subject abruptly.

"I—I think if you let my father see your picture—he would buy it," she said.

"But it is not for sale," he answered.

"Not for sale!" she repeated.

"Certainly not!" he said decisively. "Nobody shall ever possess that picture but myself, because—as I told you—I really am fearfully jealous, you know."

There was a long silence.

"This is my last night in Bramblemere," he said, at last.

"I am afraid I can never express all my gratitude to yo for saving me——"

"Pardon me," he interrupted, "it would be the easies matter in the world."

"How?"

He had risen and stood beside her; for a moment he hesitated, and then lightly touched the great red rose on her bosom.

"Give me this!" he said.

He watched the little foot tapping the grass nervously, and then very slowly her hand crept up, and with a half-shy gesture she drew the rose from its resting-place and held it towards him.

"Gwendoline," he said softly, as his fingers closed upon hers, "I want the picture, but, Heaven knows, I want you a thousand times more—much more than I can ever tell you!"

Her head drooped, and her face was hidden in the great sun-bonnet; but he lifted it, and reading the look in the shy eyes he guessed her answer, and stooping, kissed her.

A moment later a voice reached them, an authoritative voice, at the sound of which Gwendoline started.

"Why, there's father!" she exclaimed, and surely enough he appeared, walking towards them with his hands beneath his coat-tails—a sure sign that he was put out.

"Father," she cried gaily, "I'm so glad you have come in time to meet Mr. Brown."

Sir George bowed coldly. "My dear, I should like a few words in private with—ah—Mr. Brown."

"But I want to tell you——" she began.

"I said in private, my dear," he interrupted.

She turned to Musgrave and held out her hand. "Good-bye!" she said, softly, and left them together.

"Now, sir!" began Sir George; "what the dickens is all this, eh?"

"Well, some people might call it a portrait, Sir George."

Despite himself Sir George's eyes wandered to the easel, and, fixing his glasses, he examined it for a moment in surprised silence.

"By gad, sir!" he exclaimed excitedly, and then remembering himself, coughed, and turned his back upon it.

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"Now, sir," he repeated, "what the dickens do you mean by painting my daughter—you—an utter stranger?"

"My dear Sir George," replied Musgrave easily, as he collected his "goods and chattels," "why do people paint at all?"

"That, sir, is no answer; and are you aware besides, that you are trespassing?" cried Sir George.

"If my address would be of any service?" began Musgrave.

"Certainly not; ah, of course not—I have no wish for any unpleasantness; ah, I suppose," he hesitated, as Musgrave turned away, "that you would—ah, that is—you are willing to sell that picture?"

"I'm sorry, but it is not for sale, Sir George."

"Then, sir, permit me to wish you a very good evening."

"A cool, self-possessed young rascal!" said Sir George, as he watched the artist out of sight; "but, by George, sir, the fellow can paint, all the same. Brown," he repeated; "now I wonder?"—and he hurried to the gate; but Musgrave had vanished.

* * * * *

The Academy was crowded as, a week later, Sir George led his daughter round the rooms.

"Not much of a show, my dear!" he was saying; "seems to me they get worse and worse every year—hey! though—stop a minute, there's a fine bit of colour, and, by Jove!—surely—turn it up—No. 287," he cried, in sudden excitement.

Gwendoline glanced casually at the picture alluded to, and then stopped suddenly, as she saw her own face looking back at her from beneath a great white sun-bonnet.

Sir George snatched the catalogue from her unconscious fingers, and turning over the leaves, read:

"No. 287. 'The Long Sought,' by David Musgrave, R.A."

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "and Wilson called him a 'low artist fellow'—the idiot!" So saying Sir George stepped up to the picture to view it more narrowly.

Gwendoline stared after him for a moment, and then turned and sat down in a quiet corner to think. Her hand, lying upon the seat-back, was clasped suddenly by strong fingers, and looking swiftly up, she found the subject of her thoughts beside her.

"Are you angry with me?" asked Musgrave softly.

"Well, I don't quite know; why did you deceive me about your name?"

"Oh, it was just a fancy of mine while I was in Bramblemere, and then—well, I fell very much in love, and thought it would be best to keep up the idea—'love for love's sake,' and all that. I meant to tell you all along, but Sir George came too soon, and after that, I thought I would just let him find out for himself."

"But, you know," she said, after a little while, "I don't like David Musgrave's pictures a bit."

David Musgrave laughed. "What does that matter," he answered, "so long as you love David Musgrave?"

As he spoke Sir George joined them.

"Father," said Gwendoline, smiling, "I think you have met Mr. Musgrave, and—and I have promised to marry him!"

"Why, then," cried Sir George, shaking hands heartily, "you had better come down with us to Bramblemere, Mr. Brown, and don't forget to bring your picture, and we will make it a matter of exchange, eh?"

Jeffery Farnol.

"Is it true that your bride is very hard of hearing?" "It is. Why, when I proposed to her I had to shout so loud that all the neighbours ran out and congratulated me."

FATHER (to son): "My father never gave me money to spend on horses, opera tickets, late dinners, and the like." Son: "Oh, yes, but you forget that I come from a more aristocratic family than you did."

MRS. DE JAR: "Is there a lunatic asylum near here?" Mr. De Jar: "I believe so." "Do they take people on their own recommendation?" "My stars! How should I know? Why?" "Oh, nothing; only to-day I got hold of a package of my old love letters."

Is Your Birthday This Week?

We have recently secured the services of a well-known astrologer, and below will be found his information for this week's birthdays.

August 26.—To-day's children will have a favourable year for business; should speculate and advertise; a better year for health.

Young girls will find love affairs very interesting, they become engaged or marry.

The day is good for buying and selling, dealing with jewellers, visiting, and for marriage.

A child born here will be industrious and persevering, it should go into business on its own account.

August 27.—An unfavourable birthday; much travel and change. Beware of law.

Girls need care in love affairs; long journeys separate lovers.

The day is evil for letter-writing and signing papers. Defer travelling, and beware of thieves.

A child born here will be unsettled, crafty, and unfortunate. Will be very extravagant, and difficult to manage.

August 28.—A quiet year. Those in employ may expect promotion. Changes in the home affairs.

Not a good year for love affairs, and girls born between noon and 1 p.m. will have trouble and anxiety.

The day is one to keep quiet on. Ask favour near 2 and 5 p.m.

A child born to-day will be best in the employ of others.

August 29.—Trouble in business and domestic circle. Clerks and teachers are rather fortunate.

Girls born between 4 and 7 a.m. are rather favoured in love matters, but those born near 10 p.m. meet with disappointment.

The day is good for entering examinations, and dealing with literary people.

A child born this day will be unfortunate in business; will be clever, and have an active brain, but lack self-confidence.

August 30.—A doubtful year for business; keep cool, and beware of mishaps and law; insure against fires.

Young girls born from 6 to 8 p.m. must place little confidence in lovers.

The day is unfavourable for most things; guard against accident in the early morning.

A child born here will be persevering, but headstrong and hot tempered; rather fortunate in business.

August 31.—Business will need close attention this year. Do not lend to friends. Pleasant events in domestic affairs.

A favourable time for love affairs; girls born near 10 p.m. become engaged, or marry.

A child born to-day will be free and generous; unfortunate with a business of its own; the mind will be quick and original.

September 1.—A quiet year to those whose birthdays occur to-day.

Young girls must have a care in love affairs; attentions from married men; beware of strangers.

The day is good for letter-writing, visiting doctors, and military men, and for dealing with shipping agents.

A child born here will be fairly successful; will attract the opposite sex, and be fond of the water. **Asturel.**

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The Line of the Heart.

By R. Norman Silver.

"You'll Have Heaps of Clients."

"If anyone gets me to read another palm to-day, Phyllis, dear, I'll be—I'll be bothered! I'm sorry I ever learnt. But there, what's the use of threatening? Not a soul can take my place, unless we send round to Bond Street for a professional and pay an extortionate fee; Mr. Carteret—your brother—says probably ten guineas for the evening. That would be a pity, wouldn't it?"

"It would, indeed, Lady Grasmere," was the shy response, "especially when the bazaar is nearly over and you have made such a lot of money with your readings. Three hundred pounds, Diana was telling me."

Lady Grasmere, a tall, smartly-dressed woman in early middle life, smiled with a certain cheerful gratification, as she looked out across the small tea-table by which she and her companion sat, into the broad gallery of her historic town house, with its lofty painted roof and high windows on either side. Through the latter there streamed the yellow sunbeams of a radiant London afternoon, to fall upon dainty spring toilettes, fair faces, open purses, and unimpeachable masculine costumes, hemmed in by rows of gay booths, laden with costly trifles, rare flowers, delicate antiques, cobweb laces, and all the wonderful and expensive fripperies of a West-end charitable bazaar.

"They've a deal left in their pockets yet, Phyllis," she observed, "so I suppose I'd better forget I've a headache and go back to my sybil's sanctum."

Phyllis Carteret hesitated: "I'm—I'm not sure if I could help you in any way, Lady Grasmere," she said, "but I know a little of palmistry. One of dad's gamekeepers married a gipsy, and she taught me, as she called it, to tell fortunes—the line of life, the line of the head, the line of fate, and, above all, the line of the heart. I'm afraid, though, I should be dreadfully nervous."

"My dear," cried Lady Grasmere, "you are a treasure, and I'm only sorry that Mr. Carteret didn't bring you before our last day. But I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll whisper it about that a real and expert palmist, a lady of Eastern birth, has consented to give, incognito, a few consultations. You'll have heaps of clients, every other person in Society believes in palmistry. Even Ernest—you remember my cousin Ernest Merivale, the explorer—owned to me recently that he wasn't quite a sceptic, and he's not superstitious by any means. I must send you some of my special friends and we can laugh at them afterwards."

The amateur palmist recoiled. "Oh, please, Lady Grasmere," she begged, "I'd rather you didn't let a soul know. If I felt that I was going to be laughed at or—or get someone else laughed at—I don't think I could do it."

"Then I'll keep the secret most religiously," she was promised hastily; "and now, you stay here a while before joining me at my den. You recollect it? The tiny Oriental tent at the top of the gallery; slip in quietly at the back. I will rake up a wrap or two to disguise you with; half an hour hence you will be quite a sensation."

A twinkle in her shrewd grey eye, Lady Grasmere hurried away, just as a youthful figure, dark, boyish, slender, dropped into a seat by Phyllis Carteret. The resemblance between them was pronounced, save that Phyllis' sensitive features bore an expression merely of gentle gravity, those of the new-comer being both proud and melancholy.

"I'm dashed if I can stand it any longer, Phil," he murmured; "fancy, Diana and I had planned—that is, I had planned and Di had practically agreed—to have a cup of tea together as soon as the crush was over. Well, it is all over, and who do you imagine carried her off from under my very nose—Ernest Merivale, confound him!"

"My dear Austin," was the decisive answer, broken, however, by a deep, though girlish sigh, "they are engaged—you are only a very ungraceful and persistent intruder."

Her brother winced and evaded the point.

"I wish Di hadn't taken the bookstall with me now," grumbled Austin Carteret. "Merivale has been acting as a volunteer assistant, and of course because he was nearly eaten by cannibals in Central Africa and wrote it up in two fat volumes, everyone crowds to see him. I hope he goes back to Africa and that the cannibals polish him off in reality!"

Phyllis flushed. "Austin," she said, "Mr. Merivale doesn't in the least deserve such a horrible destiny. He is very kind and clever, and, if people don't flatter him, as brave as he is handsome. But I'm sorry for him, all the same."

"I like that!" retorted her brother; "isn't he going to marry Diana Urquart, and isn't he as rich as Crœsus? Poor Di, I grant you, not poor Merivale."

"He is going to marry someone who doesn't love him," replied Phyllis slowly; "any man who does that is to be pitied."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Austin; "it's a brutal thing to do, and I sincerely trust he may suffer for it!"

His sister paled. "You are not fair, dear," she protested; "you know Di won't let him guess the truth. They have been almost betrothed since childhood; there had been a cruel old feud between the families and their fathers wanted it healed. It was a shocking mistake, but Mr. Merivale cares for Di, and she keeps silence out of pity."

Austin clenched his fists impotently. "And all the while she loves me," he muttered; "she can't say she doesn't. Phil, Phil, why didn't Merivale fall in love with you? He used to be no end fond of you when he came visiting us on his college vacations, though you were in short frocks and the nursery. You'd have been far more suitable for him; Di's too quiet, too reserved—he doesn't understand her, really; I do. Now you'd have been an ideal wife for Merivale; you'd have coaxed him, petted him, bullied him, interested him—why, Phil, Phil!"

Phyllis Carteret had turned away her head and was twisting intently a simple ring or two on a finger of one slender hand. Austin had caught a betraying sound, low and suppressed, yet strangely suggestive of a sob. He drew closer to her, confused and startled.

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"I—I say, Phil," he stammered; "I'm—I'm awfully sorry, I am, indeed; I didn't dream that you—you——"

His sister pushed back her chair and rose.

"Lady Grasmere is waiting for me," she said, and her voice quivered; "do get some tea, there's a good boy—because you're crossed in love, you needn't starve yourself, need you?"

She laughed—a little faintly—and slipped into the thronged gallery without, before he could gain a glimpse of her face.

"Beware of Silence."

"Is it quite true, Lady Grasmere, or are you only hoaxing everybody?"

The querist was young, blonde, graceful, exquisitely gowned. She had slipped across from a picturesque stall—a lath-and-plaster copy of an eighteenth century bookseller's shop, designed for the Grasmere House Bazaar by a famous scenic artist—to the Oriental tent in which, for three days, Lady Grasmere had officiated as an unprofessional exponent of the fashionable craze.

"I am a diplomatist's wife, Diana," was the laughing reply; "and you won't get a syllable more out of me than I think proper. As for my substitute, she consented to act on the express condition that she was allowed to remain unknown. But this I will tell you, she learnt her palmistry in the true gipsy school, and not from any of your modern professors. Go and consult her yourself, if you're all that curious."

Diana Urquart hesitated on the threshold of the shadowy little place. Bright as was the late afternoon, it was closely draped with heavy, incense-scented stuffs and lighted dimly by lamps whose ruby and orange facets winked like jewels in its recesses.

"I don't say that I believe in palmistry the least bit," she rejoined, with affected indifference, "but I surrender to the foible of my sex—inquisitiveness; the bazaar funds will profit, that is one comfort."

She shrugged her pretty shoulders, raised a curtain, and passed into the tent. Lady Grasmere smiled mischievously.

"That was a splendid idea of mine," she murmured; "it is wonderful what charm a scrap of mystery has for human nature."

Unconscious of this philosophic reflection, Diana had entered the screened sanctum of the unknown palmist. Upon a species of divan, vaguely illuminated by the hanging lamps around, and swathed concealingly in silken wrappings, sat Phyllis Carteret, so veiled and transformed that not her most intimate friend could have recognised or even suspected her. Her fingers had been deprived of their rings, and, together with her wrists, slightly browned. Lady Grasmere was an excellent stage manager.

Diana laid a sixpence and a half-sovereign upon a low Moorish table before the divan.

"You—you are our new palmist, are you not?" she said, embarrassed in spite of herself, by the seriousness of her surroundings; "do you mind reading my hand for me? I don't usually attach much importance to such things, but Lady Grasmere tells me you are not an ordinary authority."

Phyllis gasped silently beneath her veil.

"Good gracious! Diana!" she whispered; "what am I to say to her?" She started involuntarily—a strange and arresting thought had sprung into her brain. She had no time to reconsider the idea—Diana was holding out a dainty jewelled hand; Phyllis pretended to examine it.

"I—I see," she said, rendering her fresh, girlish tones hoarse and quavering in order to suppress the one remaining clue to her identity, "that you are passing through a serious crisis—a crisis in which your heart is conscious of a divided duty. Beware of silence—silence towards one who loves you but whom you do not love. You may yet be happy—your heart-line is clear and even, except at the beginning. You seek to love where you deem you should, your heart pities yet rebels. Have a care lest you ruin three lives, your own, his who loves you, and his whom you love."

Phyllis was amazed as the words fell from her lips. Like many other women who do not dream of it, she was a born actress, and her excitement lent her inspiration.

Diana Urquart stood as if she had been turned to stone. A superstitious awe seized upon her, she felt chilled and alarmed. The subdued light, the swathed figure, the mystery surrounding the palmist—all increased the impression that had been made upon her. She laughed, struggling to regain her equanimity.

"I—I—how quaint!" she faltered; "really, you have given me quite a delightful thrill. You won't object to my not taking it too seriously, will you? Thank you, and good-bye."

She scarcely knew what she was saying, but the words served to cover her hasty retreat. Lady Grasmere glanced at her quizzically as she emerged, but could ask no questions—she herself was the centre of a chattering group, intending visitors to the unknown palmist.

Drawing a deep, almost convulsive breath, Diana went back to her own stall. There was a throng in and about it, partly attracted by the mimic shop, with its small-paned windows and hanging sign, partly by the chance of seeing Ernest Merivale, the Central African explorer and Society "lion." Chattering good-humouredly to his persecutors, the latter was busily autographing copies of his own book for one purchaser after another. As her eyes fell upon his spare, athletic frame and tanned features, an idea came to Diana Urquart. If the Sybil's warning were true for her, it must be true for Merivale—it must be written in his hand also.

Reaching the side of her betrothed, Diana motioned the explorer out of the group. He extricated himself tactfully—Diana was wondering how she might get him to try the necessary experiment, yet her heart misgave her as she realised what a blow disillusionment would be to the gay, contented man before her.

Austin threw his arms about her, and would have spoken, but checked himself, and stood up stiffly. Instinctively Diana followed his gaze—it had fallen upon Ernest Merivale.

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"Ernest," she said, "I want you to do something for me—and at once."

Merivale looked at her questioningly. "I am all-obedience, dear," he replied; "issue your commands—you will find me, as ever, your slave and adorer."

"Don't be foolish," interrupted Diana, almost coldly; "listen, you must go and have your hand read by the new palmist your cousin has unearthed. She is supposed to be a real sorceress, and I was induced to patronise her, with somewhat puzzling results. Consult her yourself, and then come and tell me what she says."

Ernest Merivale knitted his brows. "I am not sure, Di," he responded, "that I wish to pry into the future or to be made a fool of, according as one believes in palmistry or not. However, I will go and consult the oracle and inform you of her pronouncements."

He nodded, smiled, and strolled off. Diana gazed after him, half-inclined to recall him. A voice spoke to her suddenly—a voice pleading and reproachful; it was that of Austin Carteret.

"Di," he said, "aren't you tired of all this bustle? Let us have a breather in the conservatory, and I will get you an ice or some claret cup. You were going to have some tea with me, you know, only Merivale cut me out."

Diana looked at him, but lowered her own eyes under the boyish ardour of his glance.

"You are incorrigible, Mr. Carteret," she murmured; "very well, I should be glad of a moment's respite—my head is in a whirl."

She laid her hand on his offered arm, and they left the gallery together.

"I am Enlightened at Last."

"Di, Di, don't you understand that you are condemning yourself to a life of deceit? You, who are as honest as the day!—You won't be able to keep it up, Merivale will find you out, and break his heart over it. That will be three hearts broken—yours, mine, and Merivale's."

Austin Carteret flung the end of his cigarette on to the warm, damp, tiled floor of the Grasmere House conservatory, and stamped upon it viciously. The white fingers that lay in Diana Urquart's lap were interlacing themselves nervously, and her head was averted. A sudden shiver ran over her, and she looked quickly at the boyish figure lounging by her on the garden-seat.

"How strange!" she exclaimed, "do you know, I have heard almost the very same words within the last ten minutes—from a mysterious palmist Lady Grasmere has discovered. She warned me against spoiling three lives—my own, that of the man who loves me, and that of the man I——" She checked herself, blushing deeply.

Austin seized her hand. "Diana!" he said, "what a wonderful thing. But you might have finished it—you were going to say, 'The man I love.' Yes, you were, Di, and it's true—you do love me, though you are promised to Merivale."

His companion strove to rise, but he clasped her fingers appealingly.

"Forgive me, Diana," he murmured; "it's the last time I shall dare to tell you so. You've drifted into this engagement and drifted on in it till you daren't face disillusioning Merivale. You're making a frightful mistake—your palmist was right, though how she managed to read it all in your hand, I can't guess. But since you've decided to see it through, you must. I shall get abroad as soon as possible."

Diana's red lips set abruptly, and she freed her hands with a despairing gesture, to cover her wet lashes. Austin sighed.

"There," he said, "I've driven you to tears—I am an unlucky beggar. I'm sorry I raised the old question over again. You won't be bothered with me much longer, that's a comfort." And he sprang up with a certain masculine irritation. Diana clung to him.

"Austin!" she sobbed, "don't talk about going away, I can't lose you, I can't. Oh, you know I love you, but I have been a coward to Ernest all this while, and I daren't confess to him now."

She stopped, struck by a thought. "I—I forgot!" she added; "I sent him to the palmist, the one that warned me. I wanted to see what she would say to him, Austin, if she would only tell him that he is living in a fool's paradise, that the woman he is to marry doesn't love him! Oh, but he wouldn't believe it, if I told him so myself he would think I was jesting. Austin, Austin, what shall I do?"

She hung upon him with a kind of desperation—beneath her cold, proud exterior Diana Urquart concealed both the simplicity and the inexperience of a girl.

Austin threw his arms about her, and would have spoken but checked himself, and stood up stiffly. Instinctively Diana followed his gaze—it had fallen upon Ernest Merivale. Gravely, a trifle scornfully, he surveyed them.

"So," he said, "there is something in palmistry, then, unless the mysterious lady in question was bribed to tell me a particularly unpleasant truth. In any case I am enlightened at last, though I admit I should not have credited certain ominous hints had I not happened to come in search of my betrothed wife, and find her, in the embrace of—a friend."

Austin Carteret stepped forward. "Merivale," he answered huskily, "Di and I have always cared for one another—she—she tried to do as—as her dead father wished, and was going on trying. I—I had just made a last and practically futile appeal to her. I—I was really saying good-bye; I propose leaving England shortly.

Merivale's face changed, and he laid a hand on the speaker's shoulder.

"I beg your pardon, Carteret," he replied; "I have been a blind fool. Diana—Miss Urquart, I very nearly did you a great wrong. And yet you might—you ought to have told me the truth! However, you are free—employ your freedom as you choose."

Diana bowed her head, wounded and confused. "I—I was cowardly," she faltered. "But I happened to see the palmist out of curiosity, and she—she warned me against spoiling three lives by silence. I asked you to see her, wondering what she would tell you. It is very, very strange, and yet——"

"Yet she has done you a singular service," said Ernest Merivale, somewhat bitterly. He paused, a subdued hubbub had penetrated to them, and the conservatory was rapidly filling with a thin smoke.

"Fire!" he exclaimed; "Heavens, and among all that flimsy stuff." He took a rapid stride in the direction of the gallery, but halted—a thicker cloud of smoke had rolled in.

"Get Diana out by the door on the further side of the conservatory," he said, authoritatively; "it leads directly to the hall—there is danger this way." And before they could stay him he had disappeared in the pungent haze.

The atmosphere of the gallery beyond was increasingly dense, yet he could perceive that it was apparently empty, except for a leaping medley of flame and smoke. The fire had darted from stall to stall with lightning speed—visitors and stall-holders fleeing before it to the exits at the bottom of the gallery. As he stood a wall of flame sprang up behind him, cutting off his departure through the conservatory, and sweeping round on his right to hem him in. Already the room was roaring like a furnace.

He made for a window that stood in a bare recess, clear of the stalls, and smashed it open. The current of air drove the smoke back, and he saw that a feminine figure lay prostrate in the recess. He caught it up (noticing that it was slight and girlish, and wrapped in voluminous silken folds) and climbed through the sash on to the stone sill. Below him was a drop of twenty feet, down a narrow well of almost windowless walls, to a glass roof, over some hall or courtyard. A disappointed ejaculation burst from his lips.

The girl in his arms was reviving—a fold of the wrap blew aside and he beheld her face.

"Little Phil Carteret!" he cried, "she here—poor child, what a fate!" He steadied her on the shallow ledge as she

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sought to stand erect. She recognised him and comprehended their position at the same time.

"Oh, Mr. Merivale," she murmured, "how terrible! And you have risked your life for mine. I did try to escape, but suppose the smoke overcame me."

"Not at all," he told her calmly, "I discovered you when I was bolting for my own. And a bad bolt I seem to have made for both of us, Phil. To fall or jump on to that roof would mean death, and the gallery itself is a furnace. Let us try to attract attention."

They joined their voices in a resolute summons, but the crackling of the wooden fittings in the long room behind drowned them.

"Courage!" said Merivale calmly, "we will hold on as long as we can. We will pretend it is only birds-nesting—you and I went nesting once, Phil, we used to be good chums before I took to running about the world."

"I'm not frightened—very," faltered Phyllis; "but, oh, Mr. Merivale, I wish you'd forgive me the meanest thing I ever did; I can't bear to think how you'd hate me if you knew."

She raised an end of the silken wrap she had around her, over her ordinary dress, and showed it to him. He saw that her hands were stained a conspicuous brown.

"I was the palmist," she said, "the palmist who told Di that she mustn't marry you, and that you mustn't marry her."

Ernest Merivale gasped. "You!" he exclaimed; "you! But why—why—?"

Phyllis looked away. "Austin and Diana have loved one another for years," she murmured, "and I—I knew it."

Merivale sighed. "You only tried to play the good fairy Phil," he rejoined, "and my eyes needed opening. A moment ago, before Austin, I set Diana free. Circumstances conspired to drive home your hints. You have nothing to reproach yourself with."

The girl at his side made a regretful gesture. "I can't let you believe that," she said, "not—not now. I wasn't acting from any noble motive—I wanted to part you and Diana—I—I was jealous."

He stooped and kissed her gravely, then allowed her to swing off, and lowered gently.

"Phyllis!" cried Merivale, amazed, "my dear little girl—" He broke off to change places with her, gleaming, tawny tongues were licking towards them from the windows on their right. In doing so he trod on the loose extremity of her silken wrap.

"Eureka!" he ejaculated, and released it from her shoulder—it was wide and long—some six or eight yards of oriental stuff. With skilful fingers he knotted it here and there to contract it into a species of cable, tied a loop in it, and slipped it round her waist.

"I will lower you carefully," he said, "to the ledge below. Quick, there is no time to lose." He helped her to swing over the sill—their heads were close together for an instant.

"Poor little Phil," he whispered, "listen, the rope may not bear my weight. Let me tell you something in—in case of accidents. When I was a stripling about your father's house I used to promise myself that when you were old enough I would try to win your love. You were only a child then in reality, but I loved you. I proved false to my boy's love. Phil, if I live I will let you come back to it!"

He stooped and kissed her gravely, then allowed her to swing off, and lowered gently. Phyllis' feet touched the ledge below—she loosed the impromptu cable and he drew it up—aflame at the middle. One of the licking tongues of flame had ignited it, a moment later half of it dropped into the well beneath.

A scream burst from Phyllis' lips—his last chance of escape had gone. The scream was interrupted by the crash of glass and the sound of hatchets busily plied. The end of a red and double ladder appeared through the shattered panes and splintered beams of the roof below—a brass helmet, a manly visage, and the end of a hose-pipe followed it. Fate had changed her mind—Ernest Merivale was saved.

* * * * *

The stalwart heroes of the fire brigade never knew at how critical a period in a certain romance they had decided to make a flank attack on the blazing gallery, and with that object in view had broken through the courtyard roof, to find a distracted young lady on the ledge of a cornice, and a distinguished African explorer on a lofty sill above.

But Phyllis Merivale can never forget their timely arrival or cease to be one of their most generous patrons. Twice a year, on the anniversary of her wedding, and on that of a certain eventful day in May, the men of a particular fire-station near Piccadilly, dine with Ernest Merivale and his wife. Two of the latter's friends are usually there—Mr. and Mrs. Austin Carteret.

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No Wonder.

A young woman married a man who told her he was an "architect's assistant." She became disconsolate upon discovering next day that he assisted the architect by carrying bricks up a ladder in a hod."

Splendid List.

Parke: "Have you got a good list of names to select from for your new baby?" Lane: "Rather! My wife has kept a record of all the servant girls we have had during the past twelve months."

Quite Gratis.

Irate Parent (catching his clerk kissing his daughter): "Now, now, young man, I don't pay you for that kind of work." Clerk: "N—no, sir. And I don't propose to charge anything extra for it."

No Disadvantage.

Gentleman (to house agent): "The great disadvantage is that the house is so damp." House Agent: "Disadvantage, sir? Advantage, I call it. In case of fire it wouldn't be so likely to burn."

The Way of Some Women.

"Grace and Minnie have quarrelled, and are both miserable." "No, they have made friends, and are perfectly happy again." "How do you know?" "I saw them both crying together."

A Necessary Question.

Fond Father: "In giving you my daughter, Mr. Wildwed, I pass into your keeping the dearest thing I have on earth." Mr. Wildwed (anxiously): "How much does she cost you a year, may I ask?"

Complimentary.

Servant: "Oh, miss! The grocer's young man chucked me under the chin and kissed me!" Mistress (indignantly): "What impudence! I'll go to the door myself next time he calls." Servant: "Oh, miss, it'll be no use you going!"

It Would Have Been Good.

The little ones will keep on saying things. Six-year-old Mabel is industriously engaged in "cleaning out" a preserve jar which her mother has just emptied. Four-year-old Bobby looks on at her a while, and then blurts out: "I say, sis, don't you wish you could turn it inside out, so's you could lick it?"

Anticipating Troubles.

"Why do you order ten dozen handkerchiefs? What use can you have for them all?" asked a married lady of a young friend who was buying her trousseau. "There is no telling. Perhaps my husband will turn out badly, and then I'll want them all to dry my weeping eyes. Men are so unreliable nowadays," was the sad response.

A Much-needed Institution.

Mrs. Rusholme (of Lonelyhurst): "I'm so glad that the village council have decided to have a regular uniformed police force, like the city." Mr. Rusholme: "Quite an unnecessary thing, my dear, in a quiet, rural place like this." Mrs. Rusholme: "How can you say so, George? You know how impossible it is now to get a cook to stay with us!"

Making Certain.

"Great Scott! what are you writing your name in indelible ink on the cat for?" "Going to send her to the laundry, and I want to be sure she won't come back."

The Test.

Mrs. Workday: "Oh, I do like to see a strong, determined man." Mr. Workday (straightening): "So do I, my dear." Mrs. W.: "John, the coal scuttle is empty."

Then the Shopman Collapsed.

"Yes, sir," said the assistant, briskly, "we have lace of all kinds. Would you like to see Valenciennes or point lace?" "It's a shoe-lace I want," explained the customer.

A Guilty Conscience.

Teacher: "You have named all domestic animals save one. It has bristly hair, it hates a bath, and is fond of mud. Well, Tom?" Tom (shamefacedly): "That's me."

The Terrible Printer.

A dancing-master, in renewing his solicitations for patronage, wished to express his obligations for past favours, when the printer, by mistake, made him say, "Most respectfully offers his shanks."

Infant Solicitude.

A little girl, who had great kindness of heart for all the animal creation saw a hen preparing to gather her chickens under her sheltering wing, and shouted earnestly: "Oh! don't sit on those beautiful little birds, you great, ugly thing!"

A Little Mistake.

He: "You say there are no flowers for the dinner table. Where are the chrysanthemums I sent home?" She: "Oh, George, don't speak so loud, you might hurt Bridget's feelings; she didn't understand what they were, and has cooked them in milk."

The Modern Servant Girl.

She: "The play was excellent, except for one thing." He: "And what was that?" She: "The time extends over three months, and it shouldn't have been more than a week." He: "I'd like to know why?" She: "Because the same servant girl stays through it all."

The Innocent Girl.

"What nonsense all this is about men getting on their knees when they propose," said Mrs. Parslow to her dear friend. "My husband didn't do any such absurd thing when he asked me to marry him." "He did when he proposed to me," said the dear friend, without thinking.

A Different Matter.

She: "Oh, I am in an awful fix! I lost my diary in town yesterday. Just fancy some horrid person getting hold of it and reading it through." He: "Ha, ha! Well, that is a good joke. Had it your name in?" She: "No; but it had yours." He: "Great Scott! You had better advertise for it at once."

Could Prove a Lullaby.

"My wife will bear witness," said the prisoner at the bar, "that at the very time I am accused of entering Mr. Smith's premises I was engaged in walking the floor with my infant child in my arms, endeavouring to soothe it by singing 'Rock-a-bye, baby.'" "The prisoner is discharged," remarked the magistrate. "He can prove a lullaby!"

Height and Depth.

"Do you ever think, George, dear," she said, and her voice was soft and low, as befitted the perfect beauty of the night, "how closely true happiness is allied with tears?" "I don't believe I ever do," replied George. "Yes," she went on, looking up into his face, "when one is truly and wholly happy there is but little to divide a smile and a tear." "That's a fact," said George, "but I never thought of it before. There's nothing but the nose."

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WINNIE'S FAILURE.

A Charming Little Story of a Hospital Probationer.

"I SHALL know the result of my probation term to-day," said Winnie Thompson to herself. And a chill of fear crept over her at the same moment.

She felt that the verdict would be unfavourable. She had tried hard to fulfil her duties as a nurse-probationer, but she was conscious of many shortcomings. Yet it might be that she had just scraped through, as some of the nurses phrased it, and she would be allowed to continue, with a chance of realising her ambition.

She had longed to live a life of helpfulness, and the career of a nurse appeared to her as the only one in which that ambition could be fully realised. What scope was there in the sleepy little country place where she had lived since birth? Only the humdrum duties of household work.

The summons to the matron's room came about eleven o'clock in the morning, and Winnie's heart gave a great jump when she received the call, although she had been expecting it all the morning. She could picture the calm, inscrutable countenance of Miss Halifax, the matron; she had tried to read that face several times, in the hope of gaining some clue to the judgment which Miss Halifax was forming of her capabilities, but she had not succeeded. She imagined the quiet voice, without intonation expressive of the least emotion, telling her that the decision was—what?

Winnie entered the matron's apartment in response to the formal invitation that followed her own timid knock. Miss Halifax was seated at her table, writing imperturbably; she glanced up at the probationer's face, finished the sentence which she had begun to write, and then turned her attention to Winnie.

"It is my duty, Miss Thompson, to inform you of the result of your probation term," she said in her clear, cold voice. "I do not think that you are the kind of girl who need to be led to the main point through a lot of useless preliminaries, so I propose to waste no words. You have not satisfied our requirements."

She knew it at last; the verdict which she had expected had now been pronounced, and there was nothing left to be done but to return to the humdrum life of her home at Midfall and try to forget her ambition. The blow was a hard one, even although anticipated, and Winnie's face went a shade paler.

Perhaps Miss Halifax observed this, for a more gentle look came into her grey eyes.

"It is not usual to give to probationers a full explanation of the reasons that have led to their rejection," she said, with just a trace of warmth in the ordinarily cold voice, "but I feel that something is due to you, exceptionally. You have not failed as many others have, through sheer incapacity; we recognise that you have worked hard and have shown ability to a fair extent. The fact is, your physical qualifications are not sufficient; you are not strong enough for the life you would choose. That life is a hard and very wearing one, and you would break down under the strain. It is better to recognise the fact now, than to go on and collapse at the very time when great reliance was being placed on you. It is easy to conceive that such a contingency might mean disaster in some serious cases."

It was quite a long speech for Miss Halifax, and Winnie understood that the matron was unbending to her as she never did to others.

"It is very kind of you to put it in that way, Miss Halifax," she succeeded in saying. "But I fear that I have been only a great failure. It is hard for me, as I—I did so hope to be——"

A lump in her throat prevented the utterance of the rest of the sentence. The tears came to her eyes and she could not see distinctly, so perhaps she was mistaken in thinking that Miss Halifax gazed at her with pitying sympathy. The impulse of the moment caused Winnie to sink on her knees and bury her face in Miss Halifax's lap, where she gave vent to her feelings in tears. Had anyone glanced into the room at that moment, the intruder would assuredly have refused to credit the evidence of her senses.

"Come, come, my dear, you must not think that all the world is a blank because a cherished ambition has not been realised. Only by experience do we mortals learn that every failure brings in its train fresh duties and responsibilities—that is, fresh opportunities. If you have failed in this, your failure will open up other paths of work."

"Oh, I'm not afraid," rejoined Winnie, rising and drying her eyes. "I have looked at you, Miss Halifax, and have so desired to follow the career which you have chosen and in which you have succeeded."

Just the trace of a flush appeared on the countenance of the matron at these words, and a slight quiver of the lips was visible for a second; then she was calm and self-possessed again.

"This life was not the one I had chosen," she replied in the same quiet voice. "It was adopted as the result of a failure. You say that I have succeeded in it. That proves what I have been trying to tell you!"

"If my task here is ended—as it is," said Winnie sadly, "I had better leave as quickly as I can. I have not much to pack, and there is a train at 2.30. Can I leave in time for that, Miss Halifax?"

The matron bowed and extended her hand for a farewell salutation. Winnie went to the dormitory and packed her things. After a hasty dinner and an equally hurried leave-taking, she departed to catch the train for home. The nurses were sorry to lose her, but none were able to spare the time to accompany her to the station.

She sent a telegram to her father to announce her home-coming, wondering how he would take it. And what would the people of the village think of her as a failure?

She sank into deep thought as the train sped along and was oblivious of all that was going on about her. She gradually became conscious of the fact that a baby was crying rather a lot in the corner; arousing herself from her meditations, she discovered that the only other occupant of the compartment was a young countrywoman, of weakly appearance, who was endeavouring to pacify the cross child.

Winnie's fondness for children was a matter of common comment, both at home and in the hospital, and she had spent the last week of her probation in the children's ward.

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She saw that the mother was looking tired and ill, and physically unable to keep the infant quiet.

"Let me have the baby for a little while," said Winnie. "I think I can manage the young gentleman. You don't feel well, do you?"

"No, miss," answered the woman. "I always feel giddy and sick when I go anywhere by train. And I don't think I am very good at managing babies yet. He's my first, and I haven't had any experience of children, never having any little brothers or sisters. Oh, dear!"

The poor traveller, relieved of her burden, placed her hand to her forehead and looked like fainting. Winnie held the baby in her lap by means of one hand, while she drew a small packet from her bag with the other.

"Put one of these lozenges into your mouth, it will do you good. That's it. Now try to have a sleep in that corner and you will be refreshed when you wake up. I'll undertake to amuse the boy."

With a few words of thanks the poor woman lay back in the corner and closed her eyes; she was satisfied that Winnie knew something about children, and she marvelled at the fact that the boy was as "good as gold" with his new friend.

When Winnie's fellow passenger awoke she felt very much better, but she willingly permitted Winnie to hold the baby till she reached her destination. Winnie, who was going further, relinquished the baby with a feeling akin to regret.

"It was very good of you, miss," said the mother from the platform. "I'm thinking you'll be making some home very happy!"

Winnie laughed a trifle sadly, and the train moved out of the station. Her own home would not be a very happy place for her or through her; for was she not returning as a failure? Her father met her with the dog cart. She felt a little awkward, expecting to find him somewhat angry at her rejection, but he appeared much pleased to see her.

It was rather cool and a drizzling rain was falling. Winnie noticed that his cough was worse than it had been while she was at home.

"Yes, Winnie," he said, in reply to her question, "my cough is more troublesome than it was. Can't seem to shake off this bronchitis. Oh, yes, they do pretty well at home for me, but you see Carrie is only a girl, and she can't do things as you used to, or like your poor mother did when she was alive. Oh, I don't say as the cough is anything much!"

"I'll make you some of that broth, you know, dad," she cried, a peculiar pang going through her. "We'll soon have you all right."

How she blessed that dry course of lectures on bronchitis! Then there came into her mind a vague thought that she was to find her sphere of helpfulness in filling up these gaps, here and there, where no one else was handy; it did not appear to offer much scope, but it was better to be useful occasionally, as with that baby, than not at all. Occasionally? Why, the world was full of such occasions, they were always presenting themselves, and she would find enough to do!

"You remember Alec Royce?" said her father, interrupting her reverie. "Well, he's back again in the village—you know we are agitating for a charter, because Midfall is big enough to be a town now. Where was I? Oh, Royce! Well, he is back now; passed his legal examinations and taken up his father's business. The old gentleman intends to retire and hand it all over to Alec."

She had temporarily forgotten Alec Royce; they had been good friends before he went away.

Arriving at the old homestead, she was welcomed with delight by her younger sister and the two boys, younger still. She was soon "at home" in all senses of the expression.

It was past eight o'clock when Winnie sat down by the small fire that had been lighted in order to make the apartment more comfortable on this chilly autumn evening. Her father sat on the other side, enjoying his pipe after the bowl of broth made by Winnie, and his cough was certainly less troublesome. Carrie came to Winnie with a book in her hand.

"I'm so glad you've come back, Winnie. This algebra has worried me and I can't get the solution of this problem. I suppose it ought to be easy, but I don't see through the things so well now I haven't get you to help me."

"But you have got me to help you now!" laughed Winnie, and it was a happy laugh.

She soon had the problem neatly set down on paper so that Carrie could do it and understand it. Then the brothers wanted assistance. And the home itself had a more cosy appearance owing to the embellishing touches she had given it. By her side, on the table, was a note from Alec Royce, saying how glad he was to hear that she was home again, that he hoped she was home for good, and that he would give himself the pleasure of calling upon her the following day.

Winnie toyed with her pencil and meditated. She had been told that she was capable of making home a happy place; she looked about her and a new joy filled her heart. Like many others, she had failed to recognise that home offered quite a large field for the scope of usefulness and helpfulness. Failure brings fresh duties and responsibilities—that is, fresh opportunities. The words came back to her very vividly now, and she realised the truth contained in them. Taking up a half-sheet of paper she wrote—

"First failure × opportunities."

"Whatever is that?" inquired Carrie in surprise.

"That," replied Winnie, laughing and kissing her sister, "is an equation I have worked out this very day!"

Before Carrie could ask the meaning of this remark, enigmatical to her, there came a knock at the door, and Winnie saw the tall, handsome figure of Alec Royce enter.

"Hallo, Mr. Royce!" exclaimed Mr. Thompson heartily. His tone betrayed mild surprise, but that passed unnoticed. "I'm pleased to see you here again," he went on, shaking the young fellow by the hand. "I thought you were coming to-morrow, but the sooner the better. You haven't outgrown the room since you used to come—how long is it ago, Winnie?"

But Winnie was glad to evade answering that question by shaking hands with the visitor and offering him a chair. And the visitor was equally pleased to slip out of a reply to the remark about his not making his visit till the following day.

"It seems like old times to see you here once more—Winnie," he said earnestly, as he took the proffered seat. He hesitated before pronouncing her name; he was going to say "Miss Thompson," but he chanced it, and said "Winnie" as in the old days. "How are you getting on? Your father, when I met him on the way to the station, told me you were coming home for—for good, I think he said."

He wondered if she would think more of him now that he had passed his exams, and had taken up his father's business; he had had rather ambitious notions at one time, believing that there was not enough scope there for real usefulness. Winnie, on her side, was wondering if he would think less of her when he heard that she had been a failure.

"I intend to stay here," she mustered up courage to tell him. Then, gaining more courage as she looked into the honest, kindly eyes, she continued—"I have learnt, by failure in one direction, that there are opportunities in plenty everywhere, even in the most unlikely places, for useful work if one looks for it."

Alec Royce gazed at her intently, and her eyes dropped

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"How warm you have made it here!" exclaimed Alec. "I have had rather a heavy day, and my head feels a trifle confused; let us have a look round the garden."

He rose and held out his hand. Winnie accepted the invitation without clearly understanding the reason. The younger children looked amused at the notion of looking round the garden in the dark, but their father, trying to appear very grave, told them—when Alec and Winnie were gone—that *they* would be able to see a great many things in the dark which they couldn't see now, as soon as they were as old as Winnie.

"Seems as if that portrait of Winnie that I showed him the other day has made him want to see her before to-morrow," mused Mr. Thompson, a smile gradually spreading over his countenance.

"Winnie," said Alec Royce to his companion, "I must call you by the old name. Winnie, people who are in earnest, as you are, only fail when they try to do something for which they are not fitted. Winnie, isn't it possible to find a suitable occupation here? Is it not a worthy occupation to fill the position of helpmeet to——"

"I thought—that you were not coming—till to-morrow!" cried Winnie in desperation.

She guessed the avowal that was coming; she could not decide whether she desired to hear it or not, and, in her attempt to put it off, she made the very observation that hastened it.

"I couldn't wait till to-morrow, Winnie!" he declared, halting and standing in front of her. "I couldn't wait! And if you had not returned soon, I should have gone to London to tell you that I want you! You must come to me!" He took her in his arms. "Tell me," he pleaded more gently, "that you want me, too!"

Winnie opened her lips to say that she was not sure about it, but a sudden thrill told her that she would be speaking falsely. She laid her head on his shoulder and murmured:

"Yes, I want you, Alec!"

"But what about father and the children?" asked Winnie suddenly, as they were retracing their steps to the house.

"We shall live next door to them, which means that you will find so many opportunities for usefulness in the two houses that you yourself will require some assistance. Isn't that sufficient for you?"

And they both laughed joyously.

"I am glad I went away, though," said Winnie, "for it taught me to understand and secure the happiness within my grasp, but unrecognised till now."

G. Merriam.

A Riddle and its Answer.

HE: "Why is justice represented as a woman?" She: "Because her work is never done."

Could Give Testimonials.

"HAVE you ever loved another, Tom?" said Miss Gush to her intended. "Certainly," replied he. "Do you wish written testimonials from my previous sweethearts?"

Clearing Weather.

TRAMP (to buxom farmer's wife, standing in the porch and looking up at the sky): "How's the weather this morning, ma'am?" Farmer's Wife (turning suddenly and catching up a pail of suds): "Clear." And the tramp cleared.

What the Penny Saved Her.

MOTHER: "I gave you a penny to be good yesterday, and to-day you are just trying to show how bad you can be." Willie: "Yes, but I am just trying to show you to-day that you got the worth of your money yesterday."

Fatal Handwriting.

"Do you believe in this talk about discovering a man's character from his handwriting?" "I do," replied Mr. Hasbin Swift, with a sigh. "Ever know of its being tried?" "Yes, and with fatal efficacy. The experiment is most successful when the handwriting is read aloud in court."

Your Editor Chats.

A LARGE number of those who are now readers of *Short Stories* were not readers when the present serial started, and possibly did not think it worth while picking up the story half way through. Such readers will be interested to hear that another serial story will begin in the course of a few weeks.

This story is one which I have had some little difficulty in securing. Of course, every Editor believes that the serial story which he has got is better than anybody else's, and that a story like it has never been written before. I won't go so far as to say this in my case, but I will say that all my readers who anticipate a treat in the way of fiction when they look forward to this new serial story, will not be disappointed.

A new serial story depends for its success upon two things—1. That the incidents depicted shall be of such nature, and in such quantities as to hold the attention of the reader and arouse his or her interest from the first to the last. 2. That the story shall be written in such a simple and concise way as to enable the reader to see clearly the dramatic incidents which the author himself sees in his mental pictures.

In both these respects our new serial is very striking. It is crammed with incident, but not in such quantities that it cloys or tires the reader, and it is written in a bright, clear, fresh manner, without being so sparkling that it unduly exhilarates.

It is, in point of fact, a mental feast—a feast of fiction.

When you have had an opportunity of dipping well into it, you will agree with me that your little favourite, *Short Stories*, is not only keeping up its standard, but is even improving!

And now, as to this week's competition. Once again I am going to ask you to get your wits together, and to construct for me a sentence of not more than twelve words, each word containing only such letters as can be found in the two words "Short Stories." The reader who sends me in the most sensible sentence on some topic of the day, under these circumstances, will receive one of our well known *solid silver pencil-cases*. As is our custom, we will award ten consolation gifts, which shall consist of pretty little rolled gold hearts, and rolled gold charms. Post-cards only please, marked "Topic," and addressed to the Competition Editor, *Short Stories*, Henrietta Street, W.C. These must reach us not later than the first post on Tuesday morning, September 2nd.

Below will be found the names of the prize-winners in the "Reverse" competition. The first award of a silver pencil-case goes to Donald Pope, 5 Vernon Place, Birkenhead, while consolation gifts go to the following—J. Jones, 5 Worcester Place, Swansea; Miss M. Ryan, 21 Abbott's Road, East Ham; T. R. Morris, 27 Richmond Road, Oxford; J. J. C. Robinson, 60 Sherrard Road, Forest Gate; J. S. Ryan, 21 Abbott's Road, East Ham; H. Barnes, 2 Vauxhall Walk, S.E.; Mrs. Robinson, 60 Sherrard Road, Forest Gate; D. G. Jelley, 85 Ermine Road, Ladywell; D. E. Jones, 69 Beechfield Street, Mount Pottinger, Belfast.

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OUR THRILLING SERIAL.

OUT OF GREAT TRIBULATION.

By HENRY FARMER.

The Thread of the Story.

A BELT full of diamonds has been stolen from a safe belonging to Mr. Mansfield, a wealthy banker, by Seaton Revelle (who is a friend of the banker's) and an accomplice named Benjamin Beard. Revelle accuses Alec Scarsdale, who is in love with Esther, Mr. Mansfield's daughter, of the crime, and he is sentenced to sixteen years' penal servitude.

Mr. Crump, late Chief-Inspector at Scotland Yard, feeling sure Scarsdale is innocent and Revelle is guilty, determines to prove the latter's guilt.

Mr. Mansfield as fully believes in Scarsdale's guilt as does Esther in his innocence, and his friendship for Revelle increases. Revelle constantly visits the banker's house in an endeavour to win Esther's love, but so far has not prospered at all. While talking with the girl one day, Mr. Mansfield's new maid, Vance, enters the room with a tray bearing cups of coffee. No sooner does she catch sight of Revelle than she drops the tray, and, pointing to Revelle, screams: "That—that man is *my* husband!" But Revelle, by sheer force of will, compels her to acknowledge her mistake.

At about this time Esther and Mr. Crump are walking together when they observe Vance about to throw herself into the reservoir. Crump stops her just in time—he and Esther taking her back to The Woodlands. Later on she is placed in the county asylum from which she escapes, only to be murdered by Revelle. "Accidental death," however, is the verdict returned.

Mr. Mansfield thinks it best that Esther shall leave Warham for a little holiday. It is while changing at Roxeter Junction *en route* for Gurlston Bay that Fate brings about a meeting between Esther and Alec, who is on his way to Wrackam. An impassioned scene takes place on the platform. Before many days are passed Seaton Revelle also journeys to Gurlston Bay, and it is while there that they hear of the plucky rescue from drowning of a warder at Wrackam Prison by Alec Scarsdale, and, subsequently of his rumoured escape from prison.

The rumour proves to be true. Alec had indeed managed to escape from the prison, and taking a boat had pulled down the river, after purloining some sailors' clothes from an empty barge. Just when he is thoroughly exhausted, however, he is run down by a sailing barge. His boat is smashed, but Alec is rescued and taken on board. The barge proves to be the *Mary Ann*, bound for Gurlston Bay. Arrived at its destination, it is hardly moored to the pier before Esther, who is taking a walk, arrives at the pier to watch the unloading.

Shortly afterwards Revelle saunters up, when suddenly Esther catches sight of Alec in the barge. With great presence of mind she leads Revelle away from the spot before he discovers whom she has seen. Late that night, after everyone has gone to bed, Esther contrives a meeting with Alec in the drawing-room of the house in which she is staying. The two lovers are clasped in each other's arms when a man's footsteps are suddenly heard outside the door, and a minute after Revelle rushes into the room. He passes Esther without seeing her, and gives chase to Scarsdale. When he returns he has sprained his ankle and missed his man.

Crump now decides to burglariously enter Revelle's house at Warham and search Revelle's belongings. Aided by his nephew, Police-constable Wilton, who engages the butler's attention, Crump gets into Revelle's dressing-room and begins his search. He discovers a portmanteau with a false bottom. In this he finds a paper showing that Revelle and a parachutist named Balderini are one and the same man, also some letters from his wife, Vance, but no trace can he find of information regarding the stolen diamonds.

The morning after Esther's meeting with Alec, she is strolling by herself along the cliffs towards the celebrated Gurlston caves. It is here that Alec has taken refuge. Suddenly she loses her footing in the fog and slips over the edge, just managing to stop herself falling to the bottom by clinging to a ledge. But Alec has heard her scream, and rushes to her assistance. He has just secured a rope round her waist and round a tree on the edge of the cliff when Revelle arrives on the scene.

THE TRAGEDY OF THE CLIFFS.

REVELLE had caught sight of a man lying half-way over the edge of the cliff, the rope about his waist made fast to a tree behind him. For the moment, his face was invisible.

Another step forward, and the whole situation was revealed to Revelle. He could see a woman on the crumbling ledge below, a rope about her waist also. Her grey face upturned. He caught his breath with a sharp hiss, and reeled, momentarily unnerved.

Esther Mansfield!

She had become more to him than he himself had realised. Godless selfishness was the key-note to his character; but, after himself, she represented more to him than anything else in the world. An overmastering passion for her had grown up within him. His damaged ankle was forgotten. He sprang forward, meaning to go to the assistance of her rescuer; yet, for all the intensity of the moment, conscious of a feeling of jealousy. His eyes were fixed staringly on the would-be rescuer, who, at that instant, shifted his position a little, as he strained down with his outstretched hands.

Alec Scarsdale!

With telegraphic speed the explanation of the mystery of the previous night flashed through his brain, and with it a wild wave of hate. It was followed by a horrible inspiration—an inspiration how to be quit of his rival for ever, and how to put Esther under a lasting obligation to him.

It had been a matter of seconds, all this. The devil had been at Seaton Revelle's elbow to prompt him, as he had prompted him that stormy night when the balloon was skimming over Avesham Common.

And action followed hard upon the inspiration. Revelle's hand sought a pocket, whipped something from it. Limping, but moving swiftly, he reached the tree to which the rope was made fast.

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"One moment now, beloved!" whispered down Scarsdale. Then a hoarse cry.

The rope that held Esther's rescuer had been deliberately cut!

Scarsdale shot headlong forward, over Esther, down!

A piercing scream of agony from Esther; then oblivion—merciful oblivion! But the rope round her waist held fast, and a moment later, went strainedly taut. Slowly, jerkily she was being dragged up to the top of the cliff; but it was more than one man's task, and the rope was beginning to fray against the sharp edge.

Revelle glanced wildly round. A couple of coastguardsmen were racing along the cliff towards him.

"For mercy's sake, hurry up!" he shouted.

What had been impossible for one man was possible for three. A few moments later, Esther, unconscious, was lying on the turf, Revelle bending over her.

"Get to Gurlston Hall, one of you," he cried. "Tell them to send along a carriage. Don't alarm them! Say that all is well now!"

One of the men hurried off. Then Revelle, supporting Esther in his arms, turned to the other man.

"Good Heavens!" he whispered. "Awful! There was another fellow—he had made himself fast to the tree by a rope—he was straining over, trying to reach down to her when I sighted him—then, before I could get to him—awful! the rope broke—he went over headlong. Oh, my God!"

He dashed a hand across his eyes as if he were trying to blot out some horrid sight.

"He can't have had a chance. The rocks——"

"It's an awful drop," cried the coastguardsman, hurrying to the edge and going down on his knees, "but it's deep water below."

He was peering down; but he could see nothing.

"Look here," he cried. "I'll get down to the caves, on to the ledge."

He hurried away. The moment he had disappeared, Revelle's arms tightened round the unconscious Esther. He pressed a burning kiss on her white lips; then, having laid her gently on the ground, sprang to the tree. A swift glance round, then he had whipped out a pocket-knife, and was fraying the end of the rope, the end that had the appearance of having been cut through cleanly; but when he had done, he had altered all that.

When the coastguardsman returned, Revelle was again supporting the still unconscious Esther in his arms, a strained expression on his white features. The man shook his head.

"I'm afraid that it's all up!" he said, in a low voice. "There was just a chance; but there's no sign of anybody. Who was he? What was he like?"

"A stranger," answered Revelle hoarsely. "I didn't even catch a glimpse of his face. Thank Heaven, at last!"

A carriage was rolling over the turf towards them. It came to a standstill. John Mansfield sprang out.

"Oh, my child!" he sobbed. "My Esther!"

It was only as they were bearing her to the carriage that she opened her eyes. There was a wild, strange look in them.

"Alec!" she whispered. "Alec! Oh, the mist, the gathering mist!"

Then she gave a low cry, and started to babble incoherently. There was a look of mute agony in her father's eyes as he glanced at Revelle.

Would her reason survive the frightful shock?

Revelle helped to bear her to her room. She was in a high fever when the doctor arrived, and raving deliriously. Again and again she cried out that he was innocent. Then she seemed to be living through those frightful moments on the crumbling ledge. Then she pleaded to those who watched beside her not to keep Alec from her.

It came as a stunning shock to the laughing merry party that came back from Reefe Castle, the news of the ghastly accident, the news that Esther Mansfield was suffering from brain-fever, hovering between life and death. It was only when the men were gathered together in the smoking-room, talking in whispers, that Revelle, looking a broken man described what had happened. Who was the man who had gone over the edge of the cliff? If it were someone who lived in the neighbourhood, surely he would be missed before long, and his name known?

One man in the smoking-room knew his name well enough. And a suspicion of whom perhaps it might have been had flashed through another man's brain.

Gerald Phipps knew that Alec Scarsdale had been in the neighbourhood. Was it possible that he was the unknown man? If so, what a ghastly tragedy! It was only a surmise, a suspicion; but it haunted him.

A great gloom was over the house. Presently the men melted away out of the smoking-room, all but Revelle. He sat in an easy-chair, his head resting on his hands, his attitude that of a man broken down by grief. Nor was it acting! Something akin to remorse was gnawing at his heart; but he was not thinking of the man whom he believed that he had sent to his death, but of Esther. And with remorse, there was a leaden feeling of failure. In her delirium, it had been Alec, Alec, always Alec! His white, refined hands opened and shut. Passion had made a slave of the man who had prided himself on his self-control and his mastery over his emotions. It was passion, jealous passion, that had mastered him, momentarily carried him away on the edge of the cliff, an almost mad longing to be quit for ever of his rival. And he was quit of him now, he told himself, and yet—again the white hands opened and shut. He seemed to hear again those delirious babblings. Alec, always Alec!

And his white hands went on opening and shutting, those murderous white hands of his!

You may murder a man, you may murder a woman, but you cannot murder love!

Revelle looked up as the door opened. John Mansfield entered with tottering footsteps. He sank down in a chair, and clasped his forehead.

"Revelle," he whispered, "she keeps asking for him in her delirium. Is it only the wanderings of her poor mind? But she says that it was Scarsdale who saved her? This—this is more than I can bear!"

And the old man broke down utterly. There was a long silence. Revelle's hands were still opening and shutting.

"'Only let me know,' she cries," choked the grief-stricken father at last, "'only let me know that he is not dead! I can bear it if they take him back to prison. He is innocent, and we are going to prove his innocence—but only tell me that he is not dead!'"

A grey shadow stole across Revelle's white face.

"We are going to prove his innocence!"

He had been telling himself that she was forgetting. Had she been living a lie all along? Was he no nearer to her now than when he started? The thought was a knife-stab into his vanity as well as into his heart.

"We are going to prove his innocence!"

Proof of Scarsdale's innocence meant proof of *his* guilt.

And "We!" Was there another or others?

The white hands continued to open and shut. Perhaps what had happened that day had unnerved him. It was not often that he was conscious of a sense of fear. But it was upon him now, inspired by that one-syllabled word "We."

"I had hoped," he said, in a low, strained voice, "that she was beginning to forget him!"

"I had hoped so," choked out John Mansfield, "but she hasn't, and, for her sake, I'd give my right hand for proof of Alec Scarsdale's innocence. Oh, God! Her life is hanging in the balance, Revelle. It might make all the difference!"

Revelle rose to his feet rather unsteadily, shook the banker's hand in silence, then left the room. He made his way back limpingly to his friend's house. Letters, that had been forwarded from The Firs by Railton, awaited him. Mechanically he opened them, one after another—they were, most of them, rather pressing demands from creditors for money.

"Yes," he muttered irritably. "As soon as my ankle's really better, I shall have to bring that matter of the Normanhurst jewels off. Confound it all, worries never come singly!"

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CUT OF GREAT TRIBULATION.

Our Powerful Serial.

Then he lapsed again into a state of gloom.

* * *

Had he struck the water aslant, the life must have been knocked out of him; but in that awful drop Scarsdale had circled completely round, and plunged into the water feet foremost. He reached the surface, half-stunned, more dead than alive. It was instinct rather than consciousness that made him strike out towards the rocks at the base of the cliff. An in-rolling wave lifted him up and carried him forward on to a rock. He clutched hold. The water receded. He dragged himself up a little, too numbed, too battered even to think. Presently a stone, crashing down and striking the rock to which he was clinging, seemed to awaken him. He glanced up, still panting frightfully for breath. High above him, dark against the whiteness of the cliff, he saw an indistinct figure being drawn up, then disappear over the brow.

He knew that Esther had been saved!

How, by whom, he did not attempt to reason. She was saved! He closed his eyes, still too numbed for any acute sensations. For a few moments he clung on to the rock, still panting as though he would never recover his breath, the upper half of his body rising and falling convulsively. The rock to which he was clinging was close up to the base of the cliff, and some little way from the ledge of the caves. When the coastguardsman had approached the edge and glanced about him, the clinging, dripping figure had been invisible to him, screened by the rock that was unapproachable from the ledge, except by boat.

She was saved! An indistinct voice seemed to be murmuring the words in his ears. He opened his eyes and glanced dazedly about him, still panting. To reach the ledge meant a swim. He closed his eyes again. He felt weak, helpless as a child, as if all the strength had been battered out of him. The rope must have broken. Well, that mattered not now. Esther was saved! His brain for the time was incapable of grasping, realising more than that, and, for the time, it sufficed. He shifted his position, turned over on to his back. The rock slanted. He fixed his feet against a projecting crag. There was no need to cling on now with his arms. The position was more restful. Then, gradually his brain began to work more normally, and, with that, came agony. He lived through those awful moments atop the cliff again. Yet still the thought that Esther was safe was paramount. Someone must have come along the cliff, almost at the moment that the rope broke. God be thanked for that! But what of the shock? Oh, Heaven, what of the shock?

He opened his eyes again. There was a glare in them.

Then it occurred to him that he must have been seen. Men would be coming to look for him. He glanced across at the ledge. It was precipitous save in one place where steps had been roughly hewn, work of the old-time smugglers. The rope was still wound about his waist. He untied the knots. The rope must have broken; but he mechanically glanced at the end. The strands had all the appearance of having been severed cleanly through with a knife!

A curious, thoughtful expression passed over his ashen face. He wound the rope round his waist again. An unnatural calm seemed to have come over him. He slipped off the rock into the sea, and struck out for the ledge. When he gained it, he clambered up and made his way into one of the caves. Having unwound the rope, he concealed it beneath some small stones in a corner. Scarcely had he done so, when the sounds of voices reached him. It must be searchers—coming to look for him!

But did they realise that they were looking for an escaped convict?

Since his escape from Wrackam prison, he had seen no newspaper, or he might have known that it was generally believed that he had been drowned in the Thames. The voices were those of searchers who were coming to look for a dead, not a living man.

Scarsdale glanced round the cave. It was not the one in which he had spent the night. There was no tunnelling leading to caves beyond. He was in a trap. Footsteps were sounding on the rock. It was too late to slip out, and in elsewhere. He took advantage of the only place of concealment the cave afforded, a fragment of rock, once part of the roof, that had fallen near the entrance. He crouched down behind it. The search-party, composed mostly of coastguardsmen, halted just outside the cave.

"Mr. Revelle—that was the gentleman's name; he's staying along with Mr. Winter—said the rope gave before he could get to him. He didn't have time to see much of the poor chap; but his clothes gave him the look of a seafaring man. He went over head first. He must have struck the water with a force enough to knock the life out of him. You see, the cliff hangs over a bit, and he'd fall clear of the rocks at the base. No, we'll have a look round for form's sake; but I'm afraid we shan't learn anything till the tide's run out, even if we do then—poor chap! He saved the poor young lady's life—at least, we hope it is saved. I'm told that she's terrible bad!"

Then the party scattered. No one thought of looking in the caves for the body of the man who had fallen from the cliff into the sea.

Scarsdale still crouched in his place of concealment. Revelle, always Revelle! So he had been the eye-witness of the "giving" of the rope!

"Giving!" It had been cut through! A fierce, mad hunger for revenge had seized Scarsdale when the words had reached him; but it was only momentary. What had followed had driven it from him. Revelle, revenge were forgotten.

"He saved the poor young lady's life—at least, we hope it is saved. I'm told that she's terrible bad!"

What was revenge, what was freedom compared with the life of the woman he loved!

And her life was in danger. Oh, but he must know more. And yet—he thought of his freedom now! To endeavour to find out meant risking it. To be captured meant to be torn from her irrevocably, dragged back to prison, where no news would reach him for months.

How was he to find out how it fared with Esther, and convey to her the news of his salvation from death? He was experiencing an agony more acute than he had ever previously suffered!

After the searchers had left the ledge he crept out, his wet clothes clinging coldly to his limbs, a wild, strange-looking figure, on the haggard, unshaved face the expression and the lines of an old man. The frightful experience that he had been through had strained every nerve fibre in his body. Time only would tone down the memory of it all.

He told himself that he could do nothing till after nightfall; then, somehow, he would, must find out how it fared with the woman he loved!

A FRIEND IN NEED.

When Gerald Phipps left the smoking-room, he had sauntered out of the house. He was—to use his own expression—feeling frightfully cut up about Miss Mansfield. He alone knew the solution of the mystery of the previous night, and since his interview with her that morning he had conceived an immense admiration for her. As he made his way up the road leading to the cliffs, he was again wondering if by any chance the unknown man who had saved her life could have been the escaped convict of the clandestine meeting of the night before. Had they perhaps arranged some subsequent meeting? He shook his head.

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"By Jove, but, if that were so, it would be most frightfully tragic!"

When he reached the scene of the disaster, a group of men and women was gathered round the tree, from which the rope had been removed. One or two folk, who counted not giddiness among their physical failings, were standing on the brink of the cliff, staring down. The young 'Varsity man paused for a moment, then passed on, and made his way down to the caves. The wind was rising. Seeking shelter behind a boulder, he sat himself down, and lighted a cigarette.

"By Jove!" he muttered, staring thoughtfully in front of him. "But this has cut me up awfully. Awfully splendid of her to stick to that fellow through thick and thin, good and bad report, and carry herself so pluckily. There must be a tremendous amount of fine stuff in him. I wish to goodness that I could have done something more to have helped her, I do, 'pon my word! And now this ghastly business! It's too ghastly for words!"

The grey shadows of evening were creeping up above the level of the horizon. The boulder that gave him shelter shut out all view of the caves behind him.

"She's a most awfully sweet girl, and I hope to Heaven that she will come through all right. Well, I suppose everybody will be clearing off to-morrow?"

A strange-looking figure was creeping out of one of the caves behind him. It moved towards the edge, and came to a standstill beside the boulder.

"Oh, God! Only to know!"

The words were spoken aloud in a strained, hoarse voice.

With a start, Phipps leant forward, and glanced round the boulder.

Not two yards away stood a man, hatless, his rough clothes shrunken. His hair was streaked with grey, his emaciated features furrowed like an old man's. His hands were clenched. He was staring out at the sea, all unconscious of anybody's near presence. There was a world of unmistakable tragedy in the man's attitude, in his expression. For many a day after, that figure haunted the young 'Varsity man.

"Esther!"

With the utterance of the name the brown hands had come together in a convulsive clasp.

A thought had already flashed upon Gerald Phipps, and he now knew, felt as certain as if the man himself had told him, that this was convict 35, Alec Scarsdale! And this actual glimpse of him had revealed to him in a moment, far more realistically than any newspaper account could have done, what the man had, and was suffering! He meant to help the fellow, do for him all that lay within his power.

"I say—er——"

Scarsdale started at the sound of the words spoken almost at his elbow. He took a backward step, a hunted, desperate glare conjured up in his eyes. His hands were clenched and ready to strike. Phipps had risen to his feet. He thrust his hands into his pockets by way of assuring the other of his pacific intentions.

"I say," he went on, "you needn't get flurried, don't you know. I—well—er—I mean to say that I haven't the slightest intention of giving you away!"

The sincerity of the rather incoherent speech was obvious. Scarsdale's hands relaxed.

"You know me?"

"I fancy so. You're Scarsdale!"

"Yes!"

"Was it you who saved Miss Mansfield's life—who went over the cliff?"

"I went over the cliff!" answered Scarsdale hoarsely. "You know her! For God's sake tell—tell me how she is? Quick, don't look at me like that, man! Tell me!"

"She's ill, very ill," was the low, quickly spoken answer, "but bear up, man! Not so ill that there's not hope."

Scarsdale reeled.

"And," went on Phipps rapidly, "and, as soon as she's—she's able to understand things, I'm going to see that she

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It is really amazing how far and wide an article travels when once the British public sets upon it the seal of merit. It appears from an interview with the manager of the Bile Bean Co., that orders are now daily received from the cold wastes of Siberia, from the burning plains around Khartoum, from the icy north, and from Equatorial Africa; from parched lands, and from the cool sea shore. Only yesterday orders were received and executed from the following widely distant places: Boulogne, Bombay, Trinidad, Barcelona, Morocco, Essequibo, Calcutta, Madras, Allahabad, Assam, Constantinople, Middleburg (Cape Colony), Foxton (New Zealand), Belgium, Malta, Ontario, Lucknow, Jamaica, St. Johns (Antigua Island, West Indies), Cape Town, and Lausanne.

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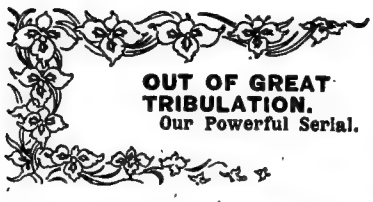

learns that you're safe. I'll see to that! But, look here, people may be coming down on to the ledge at any moment. It's not safe to talk here. I know my way about the caves. Let's get into them!"

But Scarsdale had not heard the last part of the speech.

"As soon as she's able to understand—what do you mean?"

"She was delirious—when I left Gurlston Hall. But come into the caves. Don't give way, man; while there's life there's hope!"

"And I can't go to her!" whispered Scarsdale. "Can't be with her!"

He struck his forehead in his agony. Phipps took him by the arm.

"Come into the caves."

Scarsdale had found a friend—a friend who had been won over to his side by Esther.

It was quite dark when Gerald Phipps returned to the Hall. Under his buttoned-up coat, wrapped round his waist, he carried the portion of the rope that Scarsdale had taken with him over the cliff. His boyish face wore an expression of suppressed excitement. His first act was to ask after Esther. He was told that the fever still raged, that she recognised no one. Then he hurried away to his room, and locked away the piece of rope. Dinner, that evening, was a silent, sad meal. John Mansfield was not present. Most of the guests had already arranged for their departure on the morrow. When the gentlemen retired after dinner to the smoking-room, Phipps did not join them. He retired to his bedroom for a short time. When he emerged, he was wearing a loose "Raglan" overcoat, the pockets of which had rather a full look.

When he left the Hall, he again made his way up the hill towards the cliffs, a cigarette between his lips, endeavouring to bear himself unconcernedly. Between his bedroom and the front door he had encountered no one; but had anybody witnessed his departure and his return, some hour and a half later, he might have remarked upon the fact that, whereas Gerald Phipps had left wearing an overcoat, he returned without one.

Some quarter of an hour after his return a man, wearing a "Raglan" overcoat remarkably like that worn by the young 'Varsity man—when he left the Hall, passed down the road leading from the cliffs. When he reached the gates of Gurlston Hall, he slackened down, quickened again, as if undecided between two courses.

She was lying there, hovering between life and death. Only a stone's throw away, yet he must not go to her!

Scarsdale, wearing the clothes that Phipps had smuggled out of the house, money now in his pocket sufficient to carry him to London, came to a standstill.

It was folly, mad folly, to stop!

For Esther's sake—so the young 'Varsity man had told him—he must not refuse money; must get away and try to keep his freedom. It was right, theoretically, but when it came to the carrying out, terribly hard!

Scarsdale still stood motionless, as though a magnet riveted him to the ground.

To have to leave, not knowing!

He was moving again now; but not forward—across towards the gates.

It was madness to linger in that neighbourhood after what had happened only the night before. Phipps had begged him to go direct to the station. He was in the right; but the carrying of it out was terribly hard!

He reached the gates. Only the night before he had held her in his arms. He seemed to feel again her burning, loving kiss on his lips, and now she was lying in there——

He reeled like a drunkard! Dying perhaps, dying!

FACE TO FACE.

"It's been an eventful night and day, Revelle; but in both cases you've figured as the hero. It's most grievous about poor Miss Mansfield!"

Dinner was over. Winter, the friend with whom Revelle was staying, was a bachelor. Coffee and liqueurs had been served, cigars lighted.

Revelle was not looking himself as he stirred his coffee listlessly.

"Sympathy," went on his host, "is always hard to express in words; but you know that you have mine. We must hope for the best, old chap!"

Like many others, he had believed that an engagement between Revelle and Esther was only a matter of time.

Revelle drank his coffee and rose up.

"I know you'll excuse me," he said, "if I go round to the Hall; but the suspense is almost more than I can bear. I can't endure to be away from the place for long."

"Of course I should come with you, but I asked some fellows to drop in to-night for a game of billiards after dinner."

Not long after Revelle was walking limpingly towards Gurlston Hall. He had spoken the truth when he said that he could not bear to be away from the place for long. His suffering was real.

As he neared the gates he caught sight of a shadowy figure leaning upon one of them, its back turned to him. There was something indefinably suggestive of strain about the figure. He knew that, in consequence of the affair of last night, the police were keeping watch on the place, and it occurred to him that the man might be a detective.

It was only when Revelle was close upon him, so close that he was about to ask him to allow him to pass, that the man turned round with a little start as if just at that moment he had heard the sounds of Revelle's approach.

As he was in the act of moving away quickly, Revelle stared curiously into his face.

Simultaneously both men stopped dead.

Recognition had been instantaneous and mutual.

It was not often that Revelle exhibited signs of fear; but a look of terror flashed from his dilated eyes.

He was staring into the face of the man whom he believed he had removed from his path for ever.

Esther had driven all other thoughts from Scarsdale's mind, but there had been many a moment in the past, on the parade ground, in the cell, in the quarry, when he had prayed that it might be granted him to meet face to face the man who had so irreparably wronged him. That moment had come! His face was white and rigid as marble.

After having been torn from the woman he loved, degraded in the eyes of the world, after more than a year's soul and body breaking imprisonment, after what had happened, only that morning a-top of the cliff, Alec Scarsdale at last stood face to face with Seaton Revelle.

A moment of motionlessness and silence that seemed an eternity, then all the passion and hate, so long pent up, burst their dam, and, flooding the soul of the man who had been so frightfully injured, made him mad!

With a snarl like that of some animal, Scarsdale flew at Revelle's throat. The impact almost bore Revelle to the ground.

"Help!" he gurgled out, as a grip of iron tightened round his throat.

The two men seemed to become one.

But the gurgling cry had penetrated through an open window to the ears of a number of men who were smoking and talking together in low voices.

"That sounded like 'Help!'" cried one of them, springing to his feet.

There was a rush from the room.

Outside, when they reached the gates, they could see two figures in the middle of the road swaying together. They

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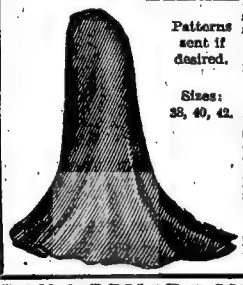

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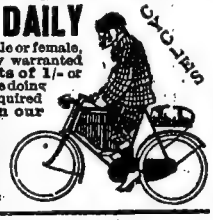

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Puts the Hair Right.
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"Trobridge, Crediton, June 18th, 1902.
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MAJOR-GENERAL KEATE.
"High Croft, Winchest
"I find the Renewer excellent, and better than anything I have ever tried in the course of a long life. I could not have believed that any preparation could do so much good in so short a time."
LADY SYKES writes:
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"I can honestly recommend 'Tatcho.' It has really entirely renovated my hair."
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"I would not be without it on any account."
MRS. BROWN POTTER.
"I use only 'Tatcho.'"

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could hear their fierce panting for breath, the scuffling of their ever-shifting feet.

It was a short, but frightful struggle. As they darted out through the gates, they saw one of the two men forced down on to his knees, the whiteness about his chest proclaiming him to be in evening dress.

"Murder, help!" cried out one affrighted man, as a sickening thud told of a merciless blow driven home.

The man on his knees rolled over, the other plunged away into the darkness—Alec Scarsdale! His brain was reeling; he knew not what he was doing. He seemed another being, something beyond, outside himself. He was temporarily a madman! It was not cowardice that made him run. It was all inexplicable. In after years he could never quite recall all that had happened on that terrible night. The events were veiled in a hazy mist.

Some darted off in pursuit; others bent over the unconscious man in the road.

"Great Heaven!" gasped out a voice, "Seaton Revelle!" The cries of his pursuers rang out behind Scarsdale; but he seemed endowed with the strength of madness. The cries were becoming fainter; he was outdistancing his pursuers.

But, in consequence of the mysterious affair of the previous night, a couple of constables had been especially told off to patrol the neighbourhood of Gurlston Hall. They were stolidly tramping up the high-road when distant cries reached them, to be followed by the sounds of footsteps racing towards them.

"Quick, mate," cried one of the constables, "there's something up. Look out! Here he is! Stop him!"

Scarsdale bounded out of the darkness.

One of the constables flung himself upon him. Scarsdale shook himself free, and sent the man flying to the ground. But the other constable was upon him. He had whipped out his truncheon. It whirled through the air and descended with a crash.

Scarsdale rolled over on the road, stunned!

It had been but a brief spell of freedom—a tantalising, maddening glimpse of light about to be followed by a darkness more hopeless, more opaque, than before.

The evening papers of the next day blazoned forth the news that the notorious convict 35 had been recaptured, telling how by an extraordinary coincidence he had encountered the man who had originally unmasked his villainy, and had savagely attacked him. And the world read and wondered. But there was nothing in the papers, as yet, of how the recaptured convict had saved a woman's life, for it was not yet known, except to three persons, that it was convict 35 who had fallen from the cliff through the "giving" of a rope.

CRUMP THE CONSOLER.

"Will you please give this card to Mr. Mansfield, and ask that I may be allowed to speak with him on a matter of great importance!"

The footman glanced at the name on the card. It was "Penworthy."

"I don't suppose," he said, "that Mr. Mansfield will see you. Perhaps you don't know that Miss Mansfield is lying here terribly ill with brain fever!"

"Oh, but I do!" said the homely, sad-faced little man, who was standing in the porch of Gurlston Hall. "Oh, but I do! Will you please do as I ask you?"

"Well, just wait here, please!"

Crump sat himself down on a chair in the hall.

"It is all very dreadful!" he said to himself sadly, "very dreadful indeed!"

He took out a coloured pocket-handkerchief and wiped his eyes.

"It is, I know, presumption on my part to intrude myself on an occasion like this. The dear child has her father with her—may God bless her—may God be pleased to spare her life!"

The coloured handkerchief failed to intercept a tear that fell to the floor.

John Mansfield was crossing the hall. Crump rose to his feet.

"Penworthy," said the banker, in a broken voice, "you can't have got my telegram—I have wired for you. My poor child in her delirium called for you. When she recovered consciousness she asked for you. You—you are a great favourite with her!"

"She is conscious now?" whispered Crump.

"Yes!"

(*The sequel to Scarsdale's fight is recorded next Tuesday.*)

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By Madge Morris.

[I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

A Lovers' Quarrel.

"HOPELESS" has been in love for three years with a girl, and up to three months ago she appeared to return it. They then, however, had a quarrel, since which there has been coolness. She has now become very friendly with a girl, and never gives him an evening. The other day she told him that "she had not the same feeling for him as previously, though she still felt a little liking towards him."

* * * *

"HOPELESS" had better leave the girl alone for a few months. This will soon show whether the attitude she has taken up represents what she really feels towards him. Such affairs as this are often settled after the parties have consented to refrain from seeing each other for a while. What has happened is evidently that the quarrel has removed from "HOPELESS" the glamour he once enjoyed in the eyes of his sweetheart. Quarrels too often have that effect. That she still confesses to liking you suggests that there is really some hope for your getting back to your old relations. But let a month or so elapse and re-enter the fray armed with your most attractive demeanour, and watch for yourself whether or not your reappearance is a happiness to her.

♣♣♣

A Pitched Battle.

"H. T. E. B." is in love. He does not claim this as an original situation, because a friend of his is also that way inclined. The curious part of it is that both are in love with the same girl. But while the girl always smiles sweetly upon, and talks intimately with "H. T. E. B.," she does not appear to care particularly for the other fellow. He (the other fellow), however, appears to regard himself as a sort of Lord Protector of the girl, and severely jumps on her (metaphorically—they are not yet married) if she shows any partiality for anyone else.

Between all this the girl does not get much amusement, for while "H. T. E. B." has not as yet dared to ask her out because of the other fellow, the other fellow never takes her out anywhere. All the while the girl wants a holiday badly. Should "H. T. E. B." offer his services as escort?

* * * *

Seeing that the other fellow is not engaged to the girl, and apparently does not stand very well in her estimation, "H. T. E. B." would seem to have as clear a field for operations as is given to most men. He should certainly offer to take her somewhere, if she really is in need of it, and the refusal should be in her hands. A man cannot lose anything by showing himself anxious to please a girl. If the other fellow has anything to say in the matter, he is open to the obvious reply that she is not in any way bound to him, and can accept any invitation she likes. As to the final assault and capture of the position by "H. T. E. B.," he should proceed on the ordinary rule that "all's fair in love and war," and if he sees any way by which he can outdo his rival, it is his affair to see to it. As I have said many times before, there is an old proverb about "faint heart," which "H. T. E. B." should repeat to himself when in doubt.

The Old Love.

"T. R. F." fell in love with a certain girl two years ago. They then had a misunderstanding, and parted. A few months back they met again. He thought she would have been cold to him. Instead of this she greeted him in the most friendly way, and was most agreeable. He saw her often afterwards, and she was always amiable. But try as he may, he could not get her to renew his previous intimacy. When he suggested it, she told him not to speak of such matters. Do I think her love is the same as before, or that it has died away?

* * * *

Probably "T. R. F.'s" friend is a sensible girl with a nice disposition, who simply feels friendly towards him, in spite of their old misunderstanding. Evidently she no longer feels deeply towards him, or would have shown it by some renewal of their old relations. He had better cultivate her simply as a friend, and in time will soon learn whether or not she has any love remaining for him.

♣♣♣

Arms and the Girl.

"F, S." writes: "On which arm should you escort a lady?"

* * * *

This all depends where you are. If on the left-hand side of the street in which you are walking, give her the arm furthest from the kerbstone. If you are taking her downstairs to supper, give her the arm nearest the wall, as the lady should walk on the inside. At a dance, give her your left arm, as most ladies like to cling on with their right arm. If you are in a remote country lane or by the silent sea shore (and are on pressing terms with the lady) I believe the right arm generally goes round the waist best.

♣♣♣

America for the English Girl.

"ENA" is, she tells me, an attractive and accomplished girl, but as yet has not met any man in a position to make her happy. She has two brothers in St. Louis, U.S.A., who are doing well in business. They want her to go out and join them there. Do I think it would be a good place for an English girl to reside in, from the point of view of matrimony, or, failing that, for making an independent living?

* * * *

I certainly think "ENA" might with advantage go out there. An attractive English girl is certainly likely to be appreciated by the natives of the Southern States, and possibly "ENA" would soon meet with the right man. As to her making an independent living, the opportunities for women in America are supposed to be much greater than in England, and with brothers already there, probably "ENA" would find the task of getting work much easier.

♣♣♣

The Young Lover.

"M. N." is a young man of eighteen earning a very small salary. He is, however, greatly enamoured of a young lady about three or four years his senior. Shall he declare his love now or wait till he is in a position to marry the lady of his heart?

* * * *

If "M. N." is sufficiently philosophical about the matter to ask my advice upon it, he should certainly see that it is far better to postpone any proposal of marriage. As to whether or not he should declare his love, that must depend on how he feels. Most men would find that, if they were really in love, they must declare it, let the consequences be what they may. "M. N." is evidently not one of these men, for he has the good sense to hesitate. Let him carry that good sense further, and devote his mind to getting on in the world. That is the main problem for a youth of eighteen.

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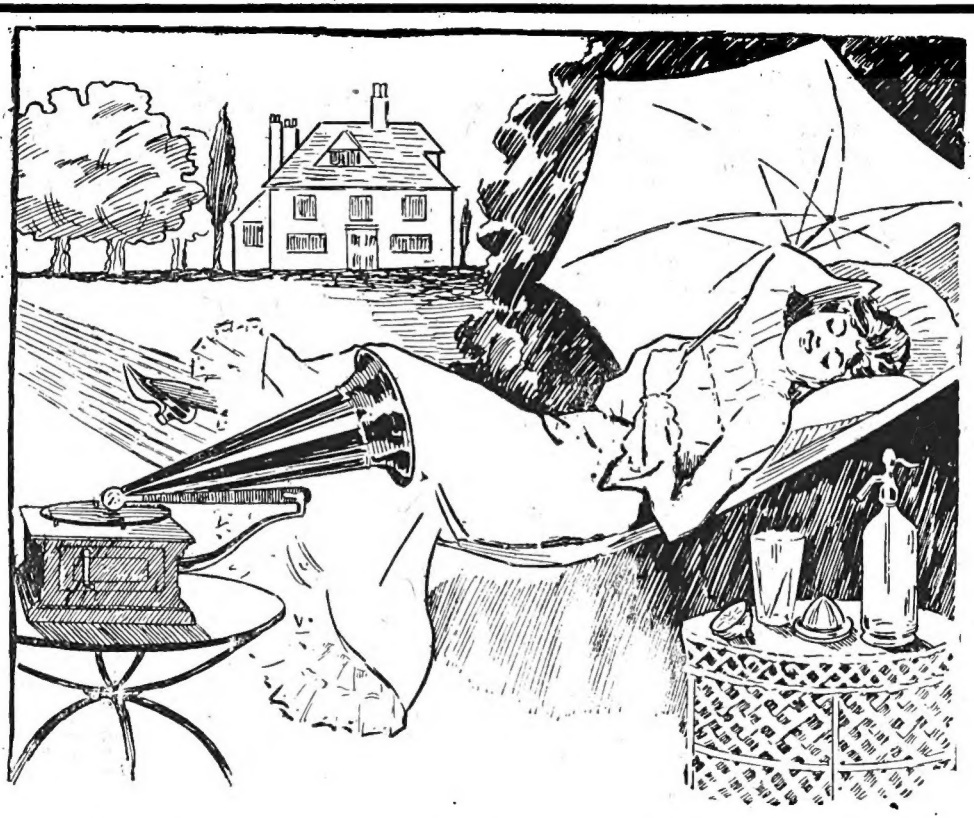

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